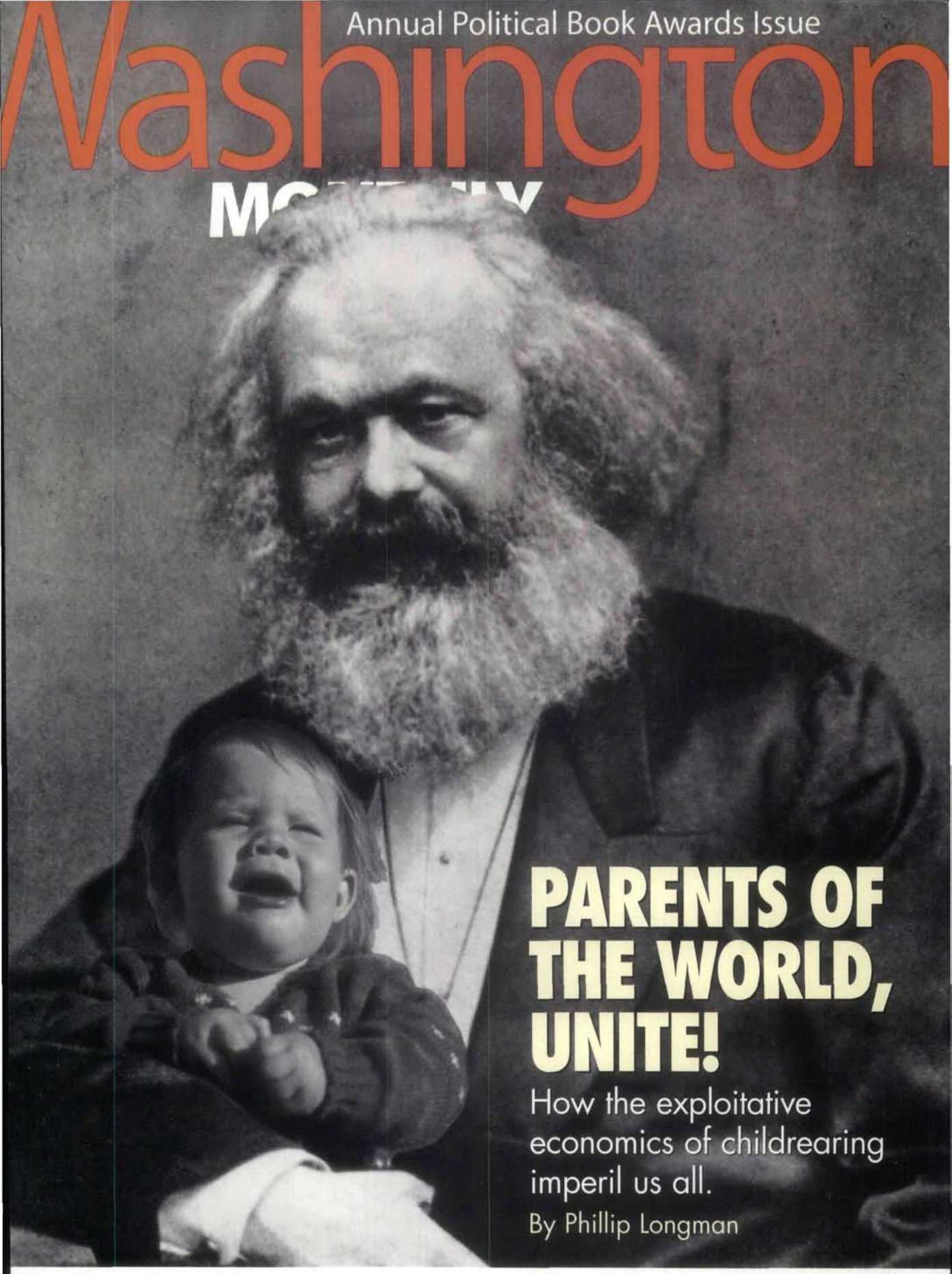
Annual Political Book Awards Issue

Washington Monthly



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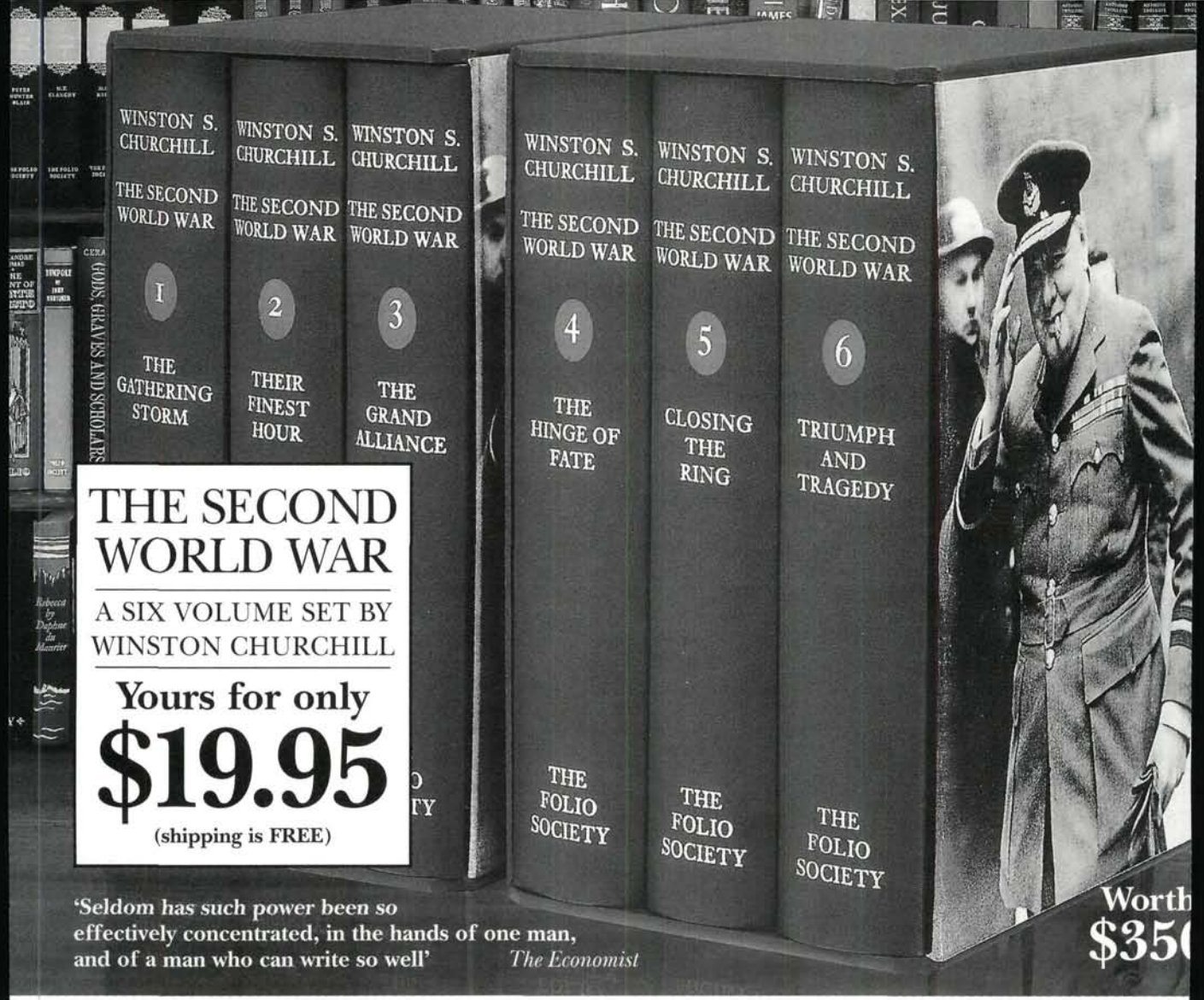

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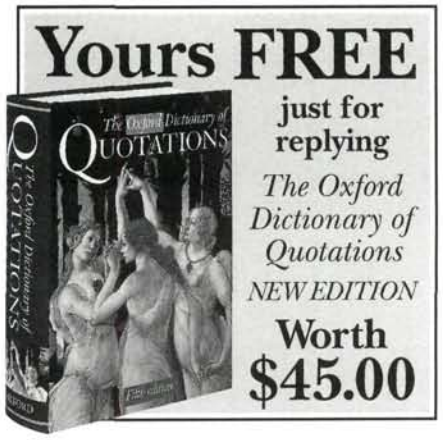

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Washington MONTHLY

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March 2004

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Letters

Shattered Glassman

I found your piece on James Glassman ("Meet the Press" by Nicholas Confessore, December) especially amusing, since I remember an essay by Glassman in the *Harvard Crimson* ages ago, in which he ranted and raved as the leftist student radical to end all leftist student radicals. Luscious, succulent irony.

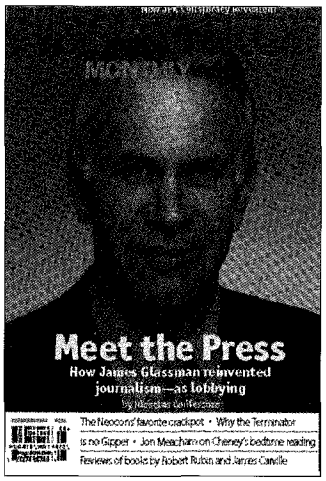
Edward Meadows
Jerez de la Frontera, Spain

Fabulous job on the piece about James Glassman. The article captures the Glassman I know from working with him in New Orleans in the '70s: a brilliant mind and mien whose personal magnetism has gotten too close to his moral compass, giving wacky readings.

Tim Lyman
via email

For years, *The Washington Post* published an op-ed column by Jessica Mathews, always identified at the end, as I recall, as a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. After her column stopped running, for whatever reason, Glassman's began running on the *Post*'s op-ed page. Unlike Mathews, however, he was not identified—until a friend of mine, knowing of Glassman's affiliation with AEI, pointed out the affiliation in a letter to Donald Graham. Try to imagine the *Post* running a regular op-ed column by someone affiliated with, say, the AFL-CIO without mentioning the affiliation. I can't imagine it. I daresay you can't.

Morton Mintz
via email



December 2003

"Glassman [is] ... a brilliant mind and mien whose personal magnetism has gotten too close to his moral compass, giving wacky readings."
—Tim Lyman

Iraq jock

In "Armchair Provocateur" (December), Peter Bergen writes that Laurie Mylroie "reversed her position [on Saddam Hussein] upon his invasion of Kuwait in 1990." In fact, Mylroie reversed her position before the invasion of Kuwait, after Saddam threatened to attack Israel with chemical weapons if Israel again attacked Iraq, as Israel did in 1981 to destroy a nuclear reactor under construction at Osirak. Saddam threatened Israel with chemical weapons on April 2, 1990, two days after *The Jerusalem Post* quoted Mylroie saying Iraq was unlikely to attack Israel and that conflict could be avoided. In the next months, Mylroie's concern for Iraq and Israel increased. On May 9, she named Iraq the "single most important country" for the PLO. On July 12, she wrote in *The Jerusalem Post* that Saddam's "new line" was moving the Middle East toward war. Iraq invaded Kuwait Aug. 2.

Brian Mitchell
Washington Bureau Chief
Investor's Business Daily

Desert swarm

"Who's Who in Baghdad" (by Joshua Micah Marshall, Laura Rozen, and Colin Soloway, December) is a most overheated and conspiratorial tract, but I feel it useful to offer a few rather inconvenient counter facts. There is no credible case to be made that the Coalition Provisional Authority has a partisan element. Among the senior CPA officials since its conception one could find Mr. Walt Slocombe, a senior Clinton administration Pentagon official, retired Rear Adm. David Oliver, also a political appointee in the Clinton administration, numerous career and retired U.S. ambassadors who have served other presidents of both parties, and no small number of retired military and general flag officers of equally nonpartisan stature. The CPA is represented by hundreds of dedicated Americans and citizens from many other coalition nations, working hard to help secure the blessings of liberty for 23 million Iraqis.

Lawrence Di Rita
Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs

I have no knowledge to quarrel with your general argument that there may be too many Republican nobodies in Baghdad. But I know two of the people you cite with scorn, Tom Korologos and Rich Galen, and neither went to Iraq to further their own political ambitions or to seek an administration job. The place is broken, and each took on an assignment that could help put it back together, despite the palpable physical danger. What on earth is wrong with Bremer using someone like Korologos who knows Capitol Hill well as his liaison there? And what is wrong with cutting through two layers of bureaucracy, Iraqi and American, to help television crews find stories? That's what Galen is doing, as he has for years, especially when he was working for Newt Gingrich.

Adam Clymer
via email

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Art of compromise

"A Time to Choose" (by Amy Sullivan, December) provides an interesting, if disheartening, look into how the vested interests of various one-issue groups can derail reasonable attempts by reasonable people to craft workable compromises in difficult policy matters. The ability to reach compromise among differing opinions has always been one of the hallmarks of success in American governance. Now, in too many cases, honest differences of opinion metamorphose all too readily into ideologies, and the stakes ratchet up for both sides.

Sullivan's account of an attempt to find a workable alternative to "all or nothing" in the abortion debate reminds us that there are, in fact, men and women of good sense and goodwill in our national government, but whose efforts are often thwarted by the shrill noises of those at the ideological poles or, worse, by the reluctance of supposedly responsible public-interest groups to risk the wrath of the ideologues.

Democracy is not well served by this deliberate polarization of issues, or by toadying to it.

Charles Murphy
Durham, NC

The Maryland General Assembly accomplished what the Congress did not. We passed a law codifying the holding of *Roe v. Wade*.

Under our statute, the state may not interfere with the decision of a woman to terminate a pregnancy before the fetus is viable, which is defined as capable of "sustained survival outside the womb." Post viability, the decision remains that of the woman and the people whom she chooses to consult—if an abortion is necessary to protect the life or health of the woman or the fetus is affected by genetic defect or serious deformity or

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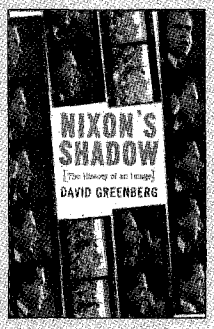

Nixon's Shadow: The History of an Image
By David Greenberg
W.W. Norton & Company

And congratulations to our Notable Books of 2003:

The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad by Fareed Zakaria

Why Societies Need Dissent by Cass Sunstein

The Progress Paradox: How Life Gets Better While People Feel Worse by Gregg Easterbrook

One Car Caravan: On the Road with the 2004 Democrats Before America Tunes In by Walter Shapiro

A Season in Bethlehem: Unholy War in a Sacred Place by Joshua Hammer

The Naked Crowd: Reclaiming Security and Freedom in an Anxious Age by Jeffrey Rosen

The Two Percent Solution: Fixing America's Problems in Ways Liberals and Conservatives Can Love by Matthew Miller

Franklin and Winston: An Intimate Portrait of an Epic Friendship by Jon Meacham

At War with Ourselves: Why America Is Squandering Its Chance to Build a Better World by Michael Hirsh

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abnormality.

Anticipating that the bill would be petitioned to referendum, pro-choice legislators included a parental notice provision in the legislation, over the initial objections of the advocacy community. A physician, not a judge, determines if the notice provision should be waived because a minor is mature and capable of giving informed consent to an abortion or notification would not be in the minor's best interest.

Maryland voters overwhelmingly approved this law on referendum, 62-38 percent. I was the pro-choice floor leader when the bill passed the Maryland House of Delegates in 1991.

Samuel I. Rosenberg
via email

Jilting at windmills

I love reading *The Washington Monthly*. I especially love reading Charles Peters's "Tilting at Windmills" column for its readiness to skewer sacred cows of the liberal establishment. That is why I was dismayed to find in his December column three—count them, three—items blaming Israel unilaterally for the continuing violence in the Middle East. Describing Arafat as "slippery" hardly does justice to a man who has lied, broken sworn agreements, and fostered violence. One may have issues with Ariel Sharon (I do), but he is the only Middle Eastern head of state to have taken office in a contested election. Arafat's election was as contested and democratic as that of Mubarak in Egypt or Saddam Hussein in Iraq. I know that it has become "politically correct" in liberal circles to bash Israel, but it is Palestinian violence that is preventing the establishment of a Palestinian state. Were the violence to end and were the Palestinians to give up their dream of destroying Israel, they would have their state within months. I expect more balance from Peters and from *The Washington Monthly*.

Rabbi Harold Kushner
Natick, Mass.

A *New York Times* reporter and Charles Peters ("Tilting at Windmills," December) both discussed the wisdom of removing all chairs from conference rooms. They must be avid readers of your publication—specifically, the May 1996 letters column—because it was there that I distilled all the wisdom I had gained from working a lifetime inside the bureaucracy. Repeat after me: "When meetings cannot be avoided, there are two ways of lessening their impact. Rule No. 1: All meeting rooms should be provided with office supplies—but not with food, drink, or chairs. Rule No. 2: All meetings should be scheduled to begin at 4 p.m. Fridays."

William M. Burke
San Francisco, Calif.

Charles Peters replies: William Burke was clearly first with "no chairs." And his 4 p.m. Friday suggestion is absolutely inspired. In response to Rabbi Kushner, I very much want Israel to survive, but I'm against the Israeli right wing and its American allies who I believe are out to sabotage any peace that would be fair to the Palestinians. Such a peace is the best guarantee of Israel's survival.

The Washington Monthly welcomes letters from our readers. Please send your comments (which may be edited for length and clarity) to:

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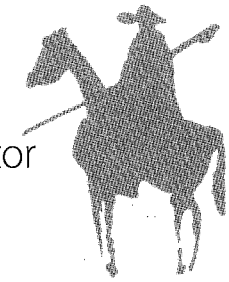
Tilting at **Windmills**

by **Charles Peters**, founding editor



Believe him or not

"Don't worry, just tell me what you know, and I promise never to tell who told me," is the siren song that a reporter uses to lure sources into talking. Should you trust the journalist? If he's Michael Brick of *The New York Times*, I would urge caution.

In a recent article about bars that still permit customers to smoke despite the city's recent prohibition, Brick tells how in preparation for the article, "Bartenders were interviewed with the assurance that they not be named and that identifying details of their establishment would not be revealed." Later in the article, he tells about "a bright and festively ornamented bar in Brooklyn where a tight group of regulars gather nightly to drink away the day's frustration, to work crossword puzzles and argue about word derivations. It is perhaps the *only* etymology bar in the city."

Susan and Sentelle

Susan McDougal recently sought reimbursement from the government for the $354,000 legal bill she ran up while she was being hounded by Ken Starr. McDougal may not have been the most innocent of lambs, but it is clear that the Starr Gestapo would not have pursued her had it not been for her friendship with the Clintons. The pictures of her in shackles are an embarrassment to American justice. But her plea for reimbursement has been turned down, reports *The Washington Post*, by "a panel led by U.S. Court of Appeals Judge David B. Sentelle." The *Post* neglected to note that Sentelle, after consulting with his patrons, Republican Sens. Jesse Helms and Lauch Faircloth, led the panel that appointed Ken Starr as the independent counsel who went after McDougal. Nor did the *Post* mention that soon thereafter Mrs. Sentelle was rewarded with a job in Sen. Faircloth's office. The latter fact has been so underreported by the press that when I once mentioned it on C-SPAN, the very well-informed Brian Lamb—the man devours newspapers—gave me a look of disbelief and asked: "Are you sure about that?"

Brave union leader

A headline I never thought I would see: "Union urges faster removal of incompetent teachers." But there it was in the Jan. 15 *New York Times*, above a story by David Herszenhorn that began:

"The New York City teachers' union proposed yesterday cutting to six months the time it takes to remove incompetent teachers, speeding a process that can now drag on for years."

Judging from past experience, Randi Weingarten, the union's leader, will face pressure from her less-talented members to forget about this proposal. But if she does follow through, she'll be guaranteed a place in my Hall of Fame.

The county scandal

One of the grandest public inefficiencies in America is the multitude of county governments. West Virginia has 55, an average of one for every 30,000 people. Each has its courts, sheriff, assessor, and other county functionaries with staffs and offices. Within each county there are also towns with mayors, city councils, police chiefs, and fire departments. Among the unhappy consequences are lots of officials with little to do. State Sen. Brooks McCabe, with the support of Gov. Bob Wise, is trying to do something about this insanity. Every state should be doing the same, because the problem is nationwide. The reason behind the present county system was explained by one official to Kris Wise of the *Charleston Daily Mail*: "When counties first began, the idea was to have the courthouse be no more than a day's walk or buggy ride away. Things have changed, but the structure hasn't."

The gotcha game

When Peter Jennings, during the final New Hampshire debate, asked John Edwards to "tell us what you know about the practice of Islam that would reassure Muslims throughout the world that President Edwards understands their religion," for a moment I suspected that Jennings was playing gotcha, trying to show up the hick from North Carolina. But, I told myself, maybe Jennings is seriously interested. After all, we should know about Islam. But then, a little later, my suspicion returned when Jennings asked Edwards this about the Defense of Marriage Act: "Senator Kerry was one of the 14 senators who voted against it. I'd like to know from you whether or not you think he was right or wrong and why."

Edwards was not, as Jennings acknowledged, in the Senate when the act was passed. But beyond that, how many people, including the reporters on the panel, before they had been briefed by their researchers, had more than a faint idea about what the Defense of Marriage Act says? Most of us knew little more than that it was anti-gay.

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But that didn't stop Brit Hume from following Jennings with a series of questions about the act, clearly trying to bait Edwards into an embarrassing answer. Edwards gamely started out trying to deal with the questions, but finally, exasperated, he said: "Why don't we talk about what's happening in the country? For example, there's been no discussion of 35 million Americans who live in poverty every day. Millions of Americans work full time for a minimum wage and live in poverty."

David Kay says he knows of no pressure from the Bush administration to cook the intelligence about Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction. But he concedes that there were "caveats" in reports by CIA analysts and that these caveats "tended to drop off as the reports would go up the food chain." Doesn't he realize that the caveats would not have tended to drop off if hints had not been coming down the chain that their disappearance would be welcomed by the higher-ups?

Fannie's falsie

Fannie Mae is running a commercial praising itself for saving "typical homeowners as much as $25,000 over the life of the loan." However, a new study by a Federal Reserve Board economist says, according to *The Washington Post*'s David Hilzenrath, that "the average homeowner saves only $87 a year, which adds up to $2,610 over a 30-year loan," or barely more than a tenth of what Fannie Mae is claiming on television.

Shelf life

A few years ago, I wondered why popular products I liked—Rise shaving cream for example—seemed to disappear from store shelves. My late and much loved friend, the cartoonist Herblock, wrote me that he had the same experience and was similarly mystified. Now we have an explanation, thanks to Margaret Webb-Pressler of *The Washington Post*. Stores are paid to display certain products. The payments are called "slotting fees." They have become standard in the supermarket industry. If the fee is not paid, the product is not on the shelf. Excuse me, but doesn't that sound like bribery?

No man in Baghdad

In our last issue, I discussed the fact that most of the CIA's agents operate under diplomatic cover. This means that where we don't have an embassy, we're less likely to have spies, which helps explain why, with no embassy in Baghdad, our intelligence on Iraq was worse than usual, and we had to rely too much on foreign intelligence agencies and on satellites. This is why those CIA analysts could only express their doubts as caveats, rather than as hard facts.

Crackhouse arrest

You will recall that I'm a big fan of articles that look into how government programs actually work when they are implemented. Here's an example from *The Miami Herald*. Reporters Noah Bierman and Wanda DeMarzo investigated how successful those electronic ankle bracelets are in preventing misbehavior by those wearing them. It was another idea that sounded good: use those bracelets to make house arrest at three dollars a day a humane and much less costly alternative to $78 per day overcrowded jails. Experience, alas, has revealed a few flaws in the idea.

One enterprising detainee figured out that he could still pursue his crack cocaine business while staying in his grandmother's home under house arrest. He cooked the cocaine in her kitchen.

Another loophole is that the wearers of the bracelets are often authorized time away from home, to visit their doctor or to attend a class. One woman skipped a class, went to a bar, and ran over a man.

"Some people fitted with bracelets," reports the *Herald*, "simply lop them off." What happens then? "The monitoring company gets an alert in Indiana, contacts the detention unit, which then contacts pre-trial services. They must get a signed warrant from a judge before sending law-enforcement officers after the absconder."

The SEC-FBI connection

"Why did the SEC fail to spot almost every major financial scandal in recent years—from improper fund trading to research analysts' conflict of interest cases, to favoritism in doling out coveted shares in initial public offerings?" ask Mark Maremont and Deborah Solomon of *The Wall Street Journal*.

One reason, familiar to students of regulatory agencies, is that Congress gives the agency too little money to perform its work. And individual lawmakers, responding to Wall Street lobbyists, often

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pressure the agency to be soft on enforcement.

The other reason is rooted in the culture of the agency, reports the *Journal*, "a reactive culture that often fails to identify a danger ahead of time, leaving the agency to respond after others expose the problem ... Enforcement action usually occurs too late to prevent large market losses." It reminds me of the FBI, which is good at catching criminals but lousy at preventing crime.

Deficit debacles

In the history of the deficit there have been some crucial turning points, moments when reason almost prevailed. One was in 1987, when members of the Senate Finance Committee, realizing that the Tax Reform Act of 1986 had gone too far in scheduling a reduction of the top rate to 28 percent, were ready to keep the rate higher but were dissuaded at the last minute by Sen. Bill Bradley, who felt his personal honor was at stake because he had pledged to lower the rate to 28 percent.

A similar situation presented itself in 2001, when Sens. Olympia Snowe and Evan Bayh tried to amend the first Bush tax cuts to provide that they would be ended if projected budget surpluses did not come about. They lost, 50-49.

In 2002, when the possibility of proposing a second round of tax cuts was being discussed by Bush and his aides, Karen Hughes dared to say, "But isn't there a real uncertainty in the economy? Real uncertainty that this won't solve?"

It was a dramatic moment. Here was the former second mommy and security blanket in chief, briefly back at the White House to consult, and actually seeming to side with Paul O'Neill in questioning the gospel of Grover Norquist and Karl Rove. Was there a chance common sense would prevail? Not according to Ron Suskind's *The Price of Loyalty*.

Bush "looked hard at Hughes"—how could she have left him?– and said, "The economic uncertainty is because of SEC overreach."

Can you believe it? Could he really think that the problem with the SEC was overreach and not, as we have seen, the underreach that permitted his pals at Enron and elsewhere to get away with fleecing the average investor.

Even Bush seemed to realize that he had not totally disposed of the issue. So he came up with an alternative: "Until we get rid of Saddam Hussein, we won't get rid of uncertainty."

Maybe that's the real reason Bush took us to war in 2003. In any event, that day in 2002, it was enough for him to decide to go with the tax cuts: "We will roll out in mid December."

Tax benefits

Of course, Bush's tax cuts have given his affluent friends plenty of extra money to spend on goodies. We've all read that it was the high-end stores that really prospered during the Christmas season. Luxury watches were among the favorite items. "At Saks Fifth Avenue," reports Tracie Rozhan of *The New York Times*, "one thousand dollar watches by Michele and Phillip Stein sold out... Buyers were attracted by the diamonds that circled the watch." My favorite luxury item, however, was a pair of women's "distressed cotton jeans," torn at both knees, by Dolce Gabbana. They're yours for $544.

NASA's deaf ear

NASA's bosses used a survey to find out what their employees thought of them. They got an earful. A sampling:

"The more spectacularly they screw up, the higher up the food chain they go ... The focus is still scheduling and budget over people, lives, doing the right thing... Management does not communicate or listen to staff; need technical people in high level meetings."

The last is not some casual afterthought, but reflects NASA managers' failure to hear the safety concerns of engineers before both the Challenger and Columbia disasters.

Cop out

Another inspiring story about the dedicated public servants of the District of Columbia: A local police officer collected $19,000 in sick pay from the district from April to August. What's wrong

HIDING THE WOUNDED

On Dec. 18, George W. Bush finally visited the Iraq wounded. He must have timed his visit to Walter Reed at a moment when almost every reporter and photographer in Washington had his back turned, because the story was barely mentioned in the press. Thus the administration continues to be successful in downplaying the story of the Iraq wounded and their agony and disfigurement. Only Jim Lehrer regularly reports the number of soldiers wounded and injured, now more than 3,000 along with the more than 500 killed.

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with that? Shouldn't we take care of sick police officers? Of course, but it seems that during the very same time period, this officer was employed full-time by the Susquehanna regional police in Lancaster County, Pa., according to *The Washington Post*'s David Fahrenthold. The district police force has 10.3 percent of its officers on sick leave or working limited duty because of injuries or stress. The figure for the New York City police department is 5.24 percent.

Liberal evangelicals

My friend Kathleen Kennedy Townsend recently wrote me about a book she was thinking of writing about religion. In it, she plans to explore the difference between religion that concentrates on the believer's relationship with God—what God can do for you—and religion that asks what you can do for God, how here on earth you can do his work.

This reminds me of what my son, who attends an evangelical church in California, tells me about the evangelicals. Their religion is almost exclusively concerned with what God can do for them. Helping them overcome alcoholism is an example. He says their belief is real and their gratitude is real and they are mostly good people.

So I've been thinking, isn't it possible that those of us who believe in a social gospel could reach the evangelicals by challenging them to express their gratitude by helping their fellow man—not only with personal acts of kindness and generosity but also by political actions through which their love can reach beyond their personal circle? Let me know what you think.

Higher learning

Willie Williams, a Miami high school football star being recruited by Florida State, was flown by private jet to the school's campus in Tallahassee. "When I got to Miami International airport, this guy was waiting for me. He was like, 'Mr. Williams, right this way.' When I got on the plane, it was like, 'Where was everybody else?' It was me, the flight attendant and the pilot," Williams told Manny Navarro of *The Miami Herald*.

Williams was met at Tallahassee airport by the line coach, who took him to a hotel—"The place was beautiful, nicest place I've ever stayed"—and then to the city's "most elegant restaurant, the Silver Slipper" where he ordered steak and lobster tail. "The lobster tail was like $49.99. The steak didn't even have a price. The menu said something about market value ... After dinner, we hit the clubs."

Sounds like living is good at Florida State, doesn't it? But it may be even more alluring at the University of Colorado, where, reports *The Washington Post*'s T.R. Reid, "Colorado coaches also dangle another inducement, according to the local prosecutor, sex with attractive female students."

District Attorney Mary Keenan states in a sworn deposition: "They were told they were going to get laid, we'll get you sex, sex Thursday night, they're going to get sex Friday night. Oh, I'm sorry you missed it Thursday night. We'll make sure you get it tonight. Come here... It's like this all the time."

Army v. Bush

A report recently published by the Army War College, not heretofore noted for dovishness, calls the war in Iraq an "unnecessary" detour from focusing on the threat posed by al Qaeda. The report goes on to say that the Iraq adventure has left the Army "near the breaking point." That conclusion was supported by a survey last fall of troops in Iraq conducted by the military's own newspaper, *Stars & Stripes*, which reports, according to *The Washington Post*'s Dana Milbank, that "half of those questioned described their unit's morale as low, their training as insufficient, and said they did not plan to reenlist." The Pentagon is now compelling soldiers to stay after their enlistment has expired.

Saying goodbye

Have you ever thought about what it must be like to be one of those soldiers getting ready to return to Iraq after two weeks of home leave, as Jeffrey Zaslow of *The Wall Street Journal* captures it, "holding fast to the final images of their children saying goodbye"?

Zaslow describes what happened when Spc. Yanira Chavez drove her 8-year-old son to school on the way to the airport to start her trip back to Baghdad:

"When her son got out of the car, he just stood there, waving goodbye. He knew he had to enter the school, and eventually he did—waving sadly until he disappeared into the building."

With that scene in your mind, think back to Aug. 26, 2002. The scene was a national convention of Veterans of Foreign Wars in Nashville. The speaker was Dick Cheney. Here's what he said:

"Simply stated, there is no question that Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction. There is no doubt that he is amassing them to use against our friends, against our allies, and against us."

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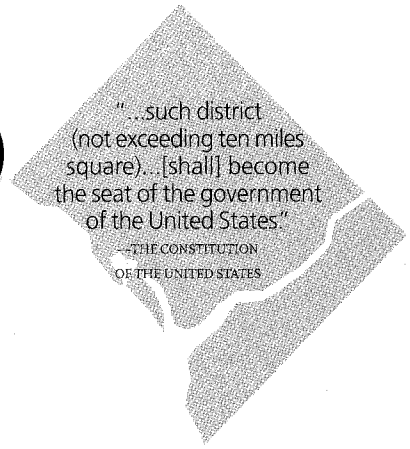
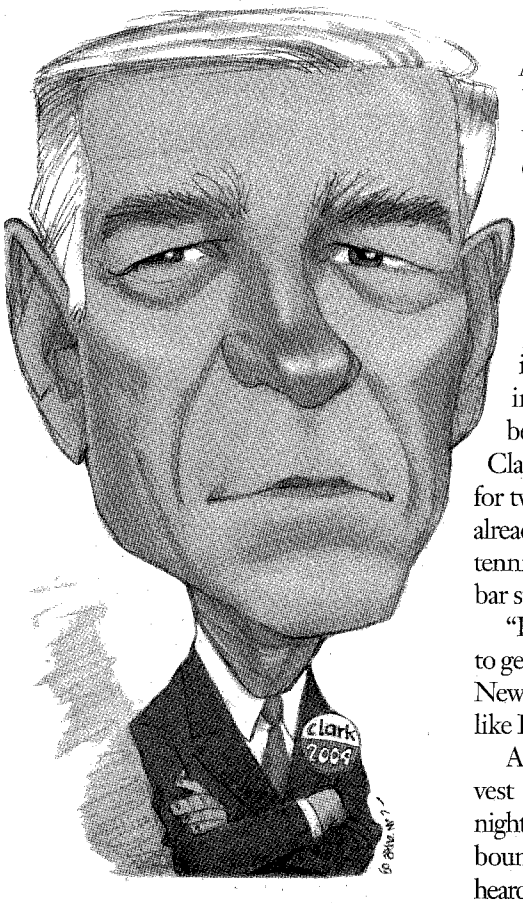
10 MILES SQUARE



All the General's Men

Wesley Clark's disappointed army in Washington.

By Christina Larson



On the night of the New Hampshire primaries, Howard Park, the Clark campaign's D.C. grassroots coordinator, pulled up a stool to the counter of the Grand Slam bar in Washington and ordered a pint. A former lobbyist, turned bookseller in his early 40s, he was wearing a navy sports jacket with a pin that read "All Patriot, No Act" over a "Draft Clark" t-shirt and slightly rumpled khakis. It was just past 7pm, an hour before the polls would close in the Granite State, but exit polls predicting the night's outcome had been on the Web all day. Though Clark would remain in the race for two weeks yet, Park's hopes had already begun to dim. He tucked his tennis shoes under one rung of the bar stool and sat very still.

"I always thought we were going to get a lot of the McCain voters in New Hampshire," he said. "It looks like I was wrong."

A young man in a grey sweater vest who had just arrived at that night's gathering of Clark supporters bounced up then to ask, "Have we heard anything yet? Any poll results?"

"Yeah, we've heard a few."

Not taking his cue from the tone of Park's voice, the second man repeated the question. "So how's it looking?"

Park shook his head. "Third or fourth."

For much of the Democratic primary season, it was an article of faith that if you were young, professional, liberal, lived in a big city, and had tuned in to the race before New Year's Day, you probably backed Howard Dean. In Washington, D.C., however, much of that demographic, like Park, gravitated straight to Wesley Clark. Months before "the general," as his supporters called him, actually entered the race, many of the young Democrats populating Washington's law firms, think tanks, and legislative offices were abuzz with talk of the former NATO commander. The "Draft Clark" movement, which collected pledge donations and sponsored TV ads urging the general to run, was launched here last March. When Clark announced his candidacy in September, armies of Washingtonians called the Arkansas headquarters—or drove to Little Rock—looking for ways to join the campaign. In November, the Clark campaign found that the most new donations nationwide had come from the 20009 ZIP code—which includes the D.C. neighborhoods of Adams-

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Morgan and DuPont Circle, home to denizens of urbane young professionals.

To many of his idealistic but politically savvy supporters, the logic of the general's campaign had seemed perfect. Their candidate was the combo platter, with John Kerry's good looks and purple heart, John Edwards's charisma and Southern roots, and Howard Dean's outsider appeal. Clark's entry into the race last fall was greeted with a flurry of media coverage, and, in polls of likely voters, he debuted near the top of the list of preferred candidates. The stars seemed to have aligned. But as time wore on, the general struggled for a message, and infighting among his professional staff over strategy meant that the grassroots saw fewer glimpses of the dynamic Clark they believed could be president—and more of a slightly mechanical speaker making stilted pronouncements about "leadership." Though Clark would later win the primary in Oklahoma and place second in a handful of other states, he never achieved the front-runner status that his credentials suggested he might.

By late January, the fact that Clark's campaign hadn't lived up to the candidate's early promise was beginning to disappoint the great number of Washingtonians who had placed such tremendous hope in the four-star general from Bill Clinton's hometown.

As Park told me, "The truth is, we'd like a slightly different result than we have tonight, but it is what it is." He rubbed his eyes under his glasses, then added, "We've come a long way. A couple of months ago, we didn't have a Clark campaign, a Web site, a movement." Park, who had campaigned for Jimmy Carter in 1976 and Gary Hart in 1984, said that no one had sparked his political fire for over a decade until Wesley Clark came along. After a moment thinking, he smiled again. "It's been very exciting, especially at the beginning."

He had come to watch the New Hampshire returns that night among friends at a sports bar in the basement of Washington's downtown Grand Hyatt. The gathering was sponsored by C Company, a network of the city's pro-Clark young professionals. Park and I headed to the back of the bar where a crowd of 50 or so supporters had gathered just as the night's headliners—a handful of congressmen who had endorsed the general—began to speak.

Rep. Bill Jefferson (D-La.) gave a rallying speech of sorts, reminding those who had trudged through the Washington snowfall to come that night that Bill Clinton hadn't won Iowa or New Hampshire either. "Wes Clark can still become president, but he can't if we don't fight, if we don't believe he can," he said. "So stay involved with this campaign."

As we waited for the New Hampshire returns to roll in, Robert Housman, a blond thirty-something lawyer who had served as the assistant director for strategic planning in the Clinton drug czar's office, remarked, "I thought I would watch this race from the sidelines ... But then I heard a rumor in our circles that Clark might run—former Clinton people have a pretty tight network, and news travels quickly." Housman's hands cut through the air for emphasis as he told me the story of how he had called the general's cell phone the day before Clark's announcement to offer his help in organizing several D.C.-area fundraisers and bringing other Clinton administration alums into the fold.

Like other Clark supporters—legislative aides who tried to finagle time off to work for the campaign, consultants and college students who traveled to the early primary states, and lawyers who admit to posting fewer billable hours since Clark announced—Housman's involvement had been poignant. "When you first start building things, you go through fits and starts. Most campaigns do this over many months. For us, it was compressed and happened under a massive spotlight." Housman raised his eyebrows in a knowing sort of way. "All the highs and lows were quicker and came faster together."

The two big-screen TVs that had been flashing muted images of Wolf Blitzer, James Carville, Paul Begala, and Jeff Greenfield suddenly posted the first returns from New Hampshire, then showing Clark coming in fourth behind Edwards. A few people groaned.

Some speculated that the die had been cast when Clark's team opted out of Iowa, where voters who didn't want Dean rallied to either a war hero or a Southerner—nevermind that Clark was both, he wasn't on the ballot in the Hawkeye state. As Park told me earlier, "I think it was a mistake to drop out of Iowa. But that's a bit like playing Monday morning quarterback now."

As the night wore on, a couple of folks hurried home to waiting

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spouses. "My poor husband, I never see him," said Stephanie Leger Short, a pretty lawyer with her blond hair pulled back in a ponytail, as she gathered her coat and gloves. Short, a co-organizer of the night's C Company event, had first seen Clark at a New Democrat Network event even before he entered the fray, and it was political love at first sight. "When he talked, I thought, *he needs to run, this man should run for president*," she explained in her Louisiana drawl. "But John Kerry," she said of the night's front-runner, "Kerry can never win in Louisiana. You know how Southern Democrats are."

Several of the younger supporters pulled up chairs to the tables nearest the TVs and ordered another round. A little later, the tally of Clark's votes climbed just above Edwards's, putting the general in third place, though still well behind Kerry and Dean. That uptick drew the evening's biggest round of cheering. A few of the more optimistic folks were soon talking about their next potential campaign road-trip.

"Are you guys in for South Carolina?" one twenty-something brunette asked a group of a half-dozen fellow travelers crowded around a table.

"South Carolina?" one lawyer, who had been knocking on doors in New Hampshire two weeks earlier, considered. "This weekend?"

"Oh, come on, you're in," she pleaded, slightly flirtatiously.

"Maybe. Well, sure."

"You're *so* in."

The campaign—and the candidate's promise—was too good to let go of just yet.

Christina Larson is the managing editor of *The Washington Monthly*.

Block the Vote

50 Floridas in '04.

By Alexander S. Kirshner

If you believe the experts, this year's presidential election might look much like the 2000 election: a down-to-the-wire and somewhat unseemly affair. And if it's anything like the last round—margins of 537 votes in Florida and 366 in New Mexico—the party that wins will have done a better job of last-minute electioneering: driving voters to the polls, explaining sample ballots to bewildered seniors, etc. One myth of American politics is that this kind of work has always been done best by seedy, working-class Democratic machines: picture Daley's henchmen politely encouraging the unwilling to vote or performing voting-booth resurrections of the dead. But things have evolved. Eight months before the election, only one party seems to be girding for this particular fight. And that party will rely not on flinty-eyed Teamsters, but on upbeat suburban lawyers with Blackberries.

On a cold, sunny Saturday in December, the Republican Party of Virginia introduced the RNC's new-style electioneering scheme to apparatchiks from around the state. The place—a suburban Sheraton ballroom—was packed with a crowd whose aesthetics veered dangerously close to Republican kitsch: elephant-emblem ties and perfectly parted hair. The Virginia GOP officials who led the seminar explained Karl Rove's 72-hour plan—how to win this fall's election in the campaign's last three days—to the operatives in the seats. In coming months, RNC field staff will lay out the plan for similar audiences across the country.

The strategy is simple. Local organizers assemble teams to contact voters and watch the polls. Some teams will go out with palm pilots so they can access data about voters on the streets they're walking. They will go door-to-door and drive people to the polls. All of this is standard electioneering. But a new tool, crucially important, they said, is that an army of attorneys will be deployed alongside the get-out-the-vote campaigners and poll-watchers.

Ever since Florida, it's been obvious that an election's crucial point is not when you vote but when the vote is counted. To get to this point, lawyers are crucial. Rove's strategy ensures that there will be a Republican lawyer assigned to each contested precinct on election day. Thus positioned, they can explain ballots to loyal voters, confront potentially ineligible voters, and challenge the legality of election conduct. It is this element of the strategy, Rove and the RNC believe, that may win them the 2004 election.

In the aftermath of Florida, Congress passed the Help America to Vote Act (HAVA), a law designed to deflate the role of post-election courtroom haggling by standardizing election equipment and procedures. But the law's most important provisions don't take effect until 2006, and the slow moving federal government has only made available 16 percent of the promised appropriation.

This has left state election officials with a big mess on their hands. Some counties have been able to upgrade. Others haven't. And funds to train workers to use the new systems, to maintain old equipments, and to sort

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out glitches in computerized tabulating systems have been in short supply. It's a recipe for disaster. In 2003, the first election cycle after HAVA was passed, states like Florida, California, Mississippi, Connecticut, and Virginia, which used new electronic voting systems, faced a host of problems, including machines that could not be turned on, that broke down, that misreported votes, that failed to transmit data, and not the least, that generally confused voters.

The situation for 2004 doesn't look much better. This November, for example, Virginia's counties will use five different kinds of ballots (optical, punch card, electronic, paper, lever machines). Twenty-two of its counties will use more than one of these systems. This jumble of old and new, electronic and paper, is apt to spark just the type of what-the-hell-is-this sentiment among both voters and poll workers that put the Florida election into the hands of the courts. And it means that Karl Rove is probably right: Lawyers who can stage an immediate and effective campaign to have ballot and vote-counting inconsistencies interpreted their way will likely do much to help their party win in November.

Soon after Florida, Democrats, like Republicans, figured they had to act. The DNC put together and funded the Voting Rights Initiative, run by former Gore campaign manager Donna Brazile and dedicated to matching the Republican ferocity in contesting the election results. It was a good idea. Unfortunately, and somewhat typical of recent Democratic operations, the project has died. Eight months before the election, while the VRI has no staff, the DNC is overwhelmed with trying to close the fundraising gap and keep up the rhetorical attacks on President Bush, the top Democratic organizational talent is scattered among the various campaigns contesting the primaries, and the new liberal 527s, non-profits designed to take over many of the DNC's traditional responsibilities, don't see this legal electioneering as part of their job. This isn't to say that this time around the Democrats have been totally remiss in ensuring their supporters get their votes counted; it's just that the planning hasn't gotten far beyond the small and, frankly, slightly disheveled office of John Hardin Young.

Young is the Democrats' king of the recount—a post-election fixer who is called upon by the DNC when the outcome of an election is too close to call. Think of Harvey Keitel's character in *Pulp Fiction*, the Wolf, but in the context of electoral systems rather than organized crime. Young, who's got a rough, likable, fast-talking wit, was at the center of the Democrats' recount efforts in Florida in 2000. He believes that election's lesson ought to be simple: "Al Gore could have been president with one word," he says. "Kinko's."

If the Democrats had built a functional operation to respond to confused voters and unhelpful election officials, Young believes, they could have responded to the butterfly ballots in Palm Beach by going to Kinko's and photocopying a sample ballot showing how to vote for Gore. They could have handed these copies to voters, and we would have had a Democratic president. On election day, "lawyers and trained field staff need to be integrated into the campaign," Young said, "so that they can identify problems, determine a remedy, and solve the voters' problems in the precinct within five minutes so that the voters can go about their business."

In other words, precisely what the Republicans are doing. "The Republicans are ahead of us today," Young admits. His office, adorned with butterfly ballots, a punch-card machine, and photos of judges examining chads, is a monument to what can go wrong without an effective election plan. Though he talks with other operatives about how to include lawyers in a Democratic 72-hour effort, he's still waiting for the DNC, the 527s, or one of the campaigns to call. Eight months before the election, his phone is still silent.

Alexander Kirshner is a *Washington Monthly* intern.

The Washington Monthly's

Monthly Journalism Award

Stephen Kurkjian

"State's Toughened Policy has Downside"
The Boston Globe
January 25, 2004

Kurkjian documents an issue that few reporters have yet paid attention to, the legacy of Massachusetts Gov. William Weld's get-tough crime policies of the 1990s: The flood of inmates who have served out their lengthy, usually drug-related, sentences and are being released has overwhelmed the capacity of the parole system and prisoner rehabilitation programs to handle them. The story warns other states, which can expect similar mass releases of felons in coming years, to beef up their ability to police paroles. Otherwise, Kurkjian warns, they might see situations like in Massachusetts, which is currently returning prisoners to the streets at a rate three times the national average, often with "little or no" parole supervision. "Many," Kurkjian writes, "swiftly reoffend."

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to one or more newspaper, magazine, radio or television stories (or series of stories) that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. We are particularly interested in reporting that explains the successes and failures of government agencies at all levels and of other institutions such as the media, corporations, unions, and foundations that contribute to the existence or solution of public problems. Please send nominations (including a copy of the article or broadcast text) to The Washington Monthly Journalism Award, 733 15th Street NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005. Or email us at editors@washingtonmonthly.com.

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WHO'S WHO

In retrospect, it's clear that **Wesley Clark**'s key mistake was skip the Iowa caucuses in January. So who had the bright idea? Chief among those pushing to bypass the state was communications strategist **Chris Lehane**, who argued that Iowa wasn't worth the resources it would take to win there, and that the media would give Clark a "bye" for skipping it because fellow candidate **Joe Lieberman** was, too. But other staffers—including deputy policy director **Chris Kofinis** and director of Internet strategy **John Hlinko**—pushed for a "Potemkin strategy," whereby Clark would aim to place third in Iowa, giving him a major boost going into New Hampshire. But the Lehane camp won, and leaked their decision to the Associated Press in mid-October. "It was a decision that didn't have to be made then," fumes one Clarkiac. "Clinton didn't compete in Iowa, but Clinton didn't say he wasn't going to compete in Iowa. Because politics changes. Dean is at the top of the mountain, and two weeks later he's at the bottom. Where were we?" Meanwhile, **John Edwards**—who had invested about as much time and money in Iowa as Clark had, and was running neck-and-neck with the former general in October—decided to stay in the running. When the caucuses rolled around, Edwards finished second.

When we last checked in with the Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad, "Who's Who" noted that many key jobs there had been filled with folks with little to no experience in such areas as post-conflict reconstruction, transitional economies, and the like—a consequence of the Bush administration's disdain for anyone with roots in the NGO community, the State Department, or the various Clinton-era nation-building projects, and its preference for loyal Republican operatives who could be trusted to toe the White House party line. Thus, **Simone Ledeen**, the 29-year-old daughter of **Michael Ledeen** of Iran-Contra eminence, now helps set economic policy for northern Iraq, while **Dan Senor**, a recently-minted MBA who spent a few months working for White House Press Secretary **Scott McLellan**, is in charge of rebuilding Iraq's media. Joining them recently was **Jay Hallen**, a fresh-faced, 24-year-old Yale graduate who, reports *The Wall Street Journal*'s **Yochi J. Dreazen**, "majored in political science, rarely watched financial news stations and didn't follow the stock market." His job at the CPA? Relaunching the now-shuttered Iraqi stock market.

It seems like only yesterday that right-wing impresario **Grover Norquist**, head of Americans for Tax Reform, raised eyebrows for his lobbying work on behalf of **Abdurahman Alamoudi**, an American Muslim leader—and thus a target for Norquist's efforts to get Arab-Americans to vote Republican—who allegedly helped raise money for groups linked to al Qaeda and Hamas. Now it appears that **Richard Perle**, the controversial Defense Policy Board member and neoconservative field marshal, is trying to get in on the act. In January, Perle gave a paid speech at a conference organized by the Iranian-American Community of Northern Virginia (IACNV), a group U.S. law enforcement officials suspect may be a front for the terrorist organization Mujahedin-e Khalq. Shortly after the conference, Treasury Department officials froze the IACNV's assets. Perle has yet to return his fee or say how much it was.

Rush Limbaugh may or may not end up doing jail time for his alleged abuse of a doctor's prescriptions to obtain OxyContin, the powerful and addictive painkiller. But it may already have cost his cousin, Missouri Supreme Court Judge **Stephen N. Limbaugh Jr.**, a promotion. Cousin Limbaugh was widely thought to be the Bush administration's pick for a vacancy on the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. But in January the White House announced that Limbaugh was no longer a contender—they picked his colleague on the Missouri court, Judge **Duane Benton**, instead.

Art by Chris Ware

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Bush's War Against Wonks

Why the president's policies are falling apart.

By Bruce Reed

Strip away the job titles and party labels, and you will find two kinds of people in Washington: political hacks and policy wonks. Hacks come to Washington because anywhere else they'd be bored to death. Wonks come here because nowhere else could we bore so many to death. These divisions extend far beyond the hack havens of political campaigns and consulting firms and the wonk ghettos of think tanks on Dupont Circle. Some journalists are wonks, but most are hacks. Some columnists are hacks, but most are wonks. All members of Congress pass themselves off as wonks, but many got elected as hacks. Lobbyists are hacks who make money pretending to be wonks. *The Washington Monthly*, *The New Republic*, and the entire political blogosphere consist largely of wonks pretending to be hacks. "The Hotline" is for hacks; *National Journal* is for wonks. "The West Wing" is for wonks; "K Street" was for hacks.

After two decades in Washington as a wonk working among hacks, I have come to the conclusion that the gap between Republicans and Democrats is as nothing compared to the one between these two tribes. We wonks think we're smarter than hacks. Hacks think that if being smart makes someone a wonk, they'd rather be stupid. Wonks think all hacks are creatures from another planet, like James Carville. Hacks share Paul Begala's view that wonks are all "propeller heads," like Elroy on "The Jetsons." Wonks think the differences between hacks and wonks are as irreconcilable as the Hutus and the Tutsis. Hacks think it's just like wonks to bring up the Hutus and the Tutsis.

In every administration, wonks and hacks fight it out. The measure of a great president is his ability to make sense of them both. A president must know the real problems on Americans' minds. For that he needs hacks. But ultimately, he needs policies that will actually solve those problems. For that he needs wonks.

President Bush has husbanded some big policy changes through Congress—a testament to his considerable political skills. Unfortunately, his policies seem to be better at causing problems than solving them. The economy can't create jobs despite hundreds of billions of dollars in stimulus. The reconstruction in Iraq is going over like a remake of *Ishtar*. The price tag of the new Medicare law is soaring even faster than prescription-drug costs. With a record $521 billion deficit, Bush has just presented what might be called the Justin Timberlake budget, ripping off the taxpayers and pretending it wasn't on purpose.

Democrats are understandably eager to blame all these epic failures on ideology. To be sure, Bush is running perhaps the most partisan and ideological White House in the modern era. His party's longstanding fondness for tax cuts has evolved into a pathological need to reduce every remaining burden on the wealthy. But the longer I watch this White House, the more convinced I become that

Bruce Reed, formerly domestic policy adviser for Bill Clinton, is now president of the Democratic Leadership Council.

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ideology is just a convenient rationalization for why the president's agenda isn't working. The real reason is darker and more disturbing: The Bush White House is so obsessed with the politics of its agenda that it never even asks whether it will work.

Hack attack

Journalist Ron Suskind first sounded this warning in January 2003, in an extraordinary *Esquire* interview with John DiIulio, the brilliant academic who had resigned from Bush's faith-based initiative the previous year. DiIulio told Suskind, "There is no precedent in any modern White House for what is going on in this one: a complete lack of a policy apparatus. What you've got is everything—and I mean everything—being run by the political arm." As if to prove the point, the White House got DiIulio to disavow the allegations as soon as they became public.

Suskind's new book about former Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill, *The Price of Loyalty*, is one long lament on the same theme: the administration's complete disregard for evidence. O'Neill becomes so desperate for an honest broker that he pleads with, of all people, Vice President Cheney: "[We] need to be better about keeping politics out of the policy process. We need firewalls. The political people are there for presentation and execution, not for creation." By the time he left, O'Neill actually pined for the less political days of the Nixon White House: "The biggest difference between then and now is that our group was mostly about evidence and analysis, and Karl, Dick, Karen, and the gang seemed to be mostly about politics."

Ironically, putting someone so impolitic in charge of Treasury only strengthened the politicos' advantage. Dick Cheney and Karl Rove could not have found an easier adversary to ignore. O'Neill proved to be a hopelessly inept bureaucratic warrior, firing off random memos about subjects far beyond Treasury's purview, such as an action plan on global environmental policy. He and his old friend Alan Greenspan privately wrung their hands over the long-term fiscal consequences of the 2001 tax cut, but publicly (and in Greenspan's case, disastrously) embraced it anyway. Despite a lifelong reputation for blunt candor, O'Neill managed to meet with the president for an hour every week while only once raising the meekest of doubts about the tax cuts. He has famously said of these meetings, "The president is like a blind man in a roomful of deaf people." But what's just as deafening is the apparent silence of those who know better.

Every White House worries too much about politics. What DiIulio and O'Neill most tellingly reveal is how little this White House worries about anything else. As DiIulio puts it, "The lack of even basic policy knowledge, and the only casual interest in knowing more, was somewhat breathtaking: discussions by fairly senior people who meant Medicaid but were talking Medicare; near instant shifts from discussing any actual policy pros and cons to discussing political communications, media strategy, etc."

What Rove wove

Rove and Cheney routinely say, and no doubt believe, that "good policy makes for good politics." We said the same thing in the Clinton White House—and over the long haul, it's almost always true. But the real question is much harder and more interesting: What makes for good policy?

The great irony is that the political equilibrium of the nation's capital depends on both wonks and hacks, but the two groups can't even communicate because the hack and wonk dialects have so few words in common. I learned this first as a campaign speechwriter and later as a White House policy geek, when I was sometimes called in to translate. In 1993, I went to a meeting with some of the president's top communications strategists to plan the signing ceremony for a bill that had just passed the Congress. A wonk had to point out that under the Constitution, if the president fails to sign a bill within 10 days while the Congress is adjourned, the bill is pocket vetoed and does not become law.

On the most politically charged issues, like crime and welfare reform, hacks thought wonks were from Pluto and wonks thought hacks were from Uranus. Near the end of Clinton's first year in office, a series of high-profile murders produced a groundswell of public support for our crime bill. One group of wonks, terrified that the public might get what it wanted, formed a violence prevention task force whose sole purpose seemed to be churning out ideas the public would not support. The task force included one of the most ridiculously named subcommittees of all time, the "Subgroup on Place." Hacks still laugh about it.

Wonks were just as quick to sneer at their adversaries. Every time I brought them a message from the hacks, they made me feel like a wonk without a country. When I co-chaired Clinton's welfare reform working group from 1993-94, every time I won a policy argument, a dissenting member would leak to the press that we were driven by political expediency. Harvard professor David Ellwood, one of two assistant secretaries at the Department of Health and Human Services who served as my co-chairs, teased me all the time over how little White House politicos knew about welfare. In *The New York Times*' tick-tock story on our efforts, Ellwood gleefully described my role as "right-wing hack."

Paul O'Neill is naïve to wish for an upstairs-downstairs divide, where wonks make all the decisions and hacks get to spin them. As a wonk, I would be the last to suggest that my fellow propeller heads have all the answers. I spent Clinton's first term across the hall from Ira Magaziner, architect of the administration's health care plan. The road to Ira's office was paved with good intentions.

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On the other hand, O'Neill is right to worry about the republic if indeed the hacks are in charge. In 1995, when Clinton brought in Dick Morris to get the White House's politics back on track, I was the wonk assigned to shoot down hack ideas if they didn't pass wonk muster. Every week, Morris had at least one notion crazy enough to get us laughed out of town. I especially liked his proposal to put voluntary warning labels on violent toys, so that parents would know, for example, that a toy gun was actually a toy gun. Morris always reminded me of the Tom Lehrer song about the German rocket scientist, Wernher von Braun: "Once the rockets are up, who cares where they come down? / That's not my department, says Wernher von Braun." (For all his faults, though, Morris was often a useful spur to the bureaucracy, because he enabled the White House policy team to deploy our own Madman Theory: If the agencies wouldn't go along with our sensible proposals, we warned them that the president might just listen to Dick Morris. Agency productivity soared as a result.)

Karl Rove may not have Morris's eccentricities. But O'Neill's instincts are correct: Any president who lets people like Rove make the key decisions is sure to get the big ones wrong. Even the most gifted hacks, like Rove and Morris, have an insurmountable blind spot: The only results they understand are polling.

Consider perhaps the most telling example of Rove's policy input—Bush's 2002 decision to impose tariffs on imported steel. Bush's economic advisers unanimously opposed the move, on the grounds that it was directly contrary to the president's principles, and would cost more jobs at factories that make products with steel than it would help steelworkers. But Rove insisted that politics should trump principle, and that the steel vote was essential to Bush's hopes in Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

And so Rove got a day of headlines in those states, followed by a week of national stories critical of the administration's cynicism. More important, the results of the policy quickly became clear: An International Trade Commission report found that the tariffs were hurting steel buyers nine times more than they helped steel producers. The move nearly sparked a disastrous trade war with the European Union. In December 2003, the president was forced to reverse himself and abandon the tariffs. The revised political tally sheet shows why Rove is no genius: The president looks unprincipled and foolish, the recovery is slower in key states like Michigan and Florida, and steelworkers are angrier than ever.

As we begin an election year, the paint-by-numbers politics of this White House is wearing thin. The administration threw over conservatives last fall to get a prescription drug bill because elderly voters are crucial in Florida. The result: The bill turns out to cost $134 billion more than the White House told Congress, angry right-wingers have forced Bush to cut other popular programs like Even Start, and even though the drug benefit doesn't take effect until 2006, polls show the bill is already unpopular among seniors.

When hacks rule, policies often drool—and come back to hurt hacks' cause. Bush's proposal to grant temporary legal status to guest workers is another Rove rifle-shot at Hispanics. Unfortunately, Hispanics quickly figured out that the proposal wouldn't actually lead to citizenship, because the White House had bowed to political pressure from another quarter, the far right. Now most Hispanics don't like the idea and the right wing hates it. That manned mission to Mars, which the White House hoped would lift Bush's appeal for a second term, bombed so badly that the President couldn't even find time to mention it in the State of the Union.

Wonk if you love the issues

The American people are a lot smarter than either the hacks or the wonks give them credit for. For all the talk in both parties about the urgent need to win one constituency or another, most Americans apply the same political yardstick: They vote for what works. There aren't enough hacks, even in Washington, to sell a policy that doesn't.

Hacks and wonks still need each other. In the end, the best leaders are those who can surround themselves with the best advice from both quarters, and synthesize it to find the wisest, straightest course the nation can sustain. As O'Neill puts it, what holds a good administration together is that the president's advisers like "the way the president thinks."

The secret of Bill Clinton's success was that he was the biggest wonk ever to hold the presidency, with political gifts that no hack could equal. He said he would cut the deficit and boost the economy, and he did. He said he would put more cops on the street to lower the crime rate, and he did. He said he would end welfare as we know it in a way that wouldn't hurt those in the system, and he did. (The Census Bureau recently reported that poverty among single mothers had fallen by a stunning one-third from 1993 to 2001, a turnaround *The Washington Post* credited mainly to the work requirements and child support provisions of Clinton's 1996 welfare reform law.) Clinton was his own best policy adviser, by far, yet he also would have been the greatest political consultant in the history of the world's second oldest profession.

Presidents don't have to be super wonks, and George W. Bush certainly never promised to be one. Long before he expressed any interest in the presidency, he was known as a consummate political hack. He worked on several of his father's campaigns, including as an enforcer in the failed 1992 bid, and even now finds himself dealing with charges that he may have skipped some National Guard duty to work on a Senate campaign.

In the end, Bush's undoing may be that he has planted his flag so firmly on one side of the wonk-hack divide. Sooner or later, the fate of every White House comes down to the way the president thinks. ◆

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Raising Hell

How the punishing costs of childbearing imperil us all.

By Phillip Longman

This year's presidential race underscores a curious truth about American politics today: Elected officials love to talk about "family values" and "investing in our kids," but shy away from proposing anything big or new that would actually help them. The only item in President Bush's new budget directed at parents is a call for making his temporary increase in the child tax credit (from $600 to $1,000) permanent. His Democratic challengers have offered a few modest ideas, such as universal after-school programs ($4 billion a year). Compare these budget-conscious proposals to the bidding war now underway for the senior vote. President Bush recently signed a Medicare prescription-drug benefit that will cost $400 billion—oops, make that $534 billion—over the next 10 years. Preliminary estimates of the program's long-term cost in current dollars range up to $8 trillion, or more than four times the entire federal budget. Democrats complain the benefits are far too skimpy and should be yet hundreds of billions of dollars higher.

What explains the relative parsimony towards those who nurture children? Not voting power. According to the 2000 presidential election exit polls, parents with children under 18 accounted for 39 percent of all votes cast. By comparison, persons over 65 accounted for only 14 percent. If we presume that politicians know how to count votes and read polls, the only explanation seems to be that most voters—probably even most parents—don't think that those who nurture the next generation are unfairly burdened. Indeed, many voters have something like the opposite sense. "Don't we all pay school taxes to support their kids?" they say. "If they can't afford children, they shouldn't have them." Some go even further. In her book *The Baby Boon*, Elinor Burkett charges that "handing out goodies to parents just because they are parents is affirmative action—the preferential treatment of one group designed to correct real or perceived discrimination or inequality—based on reproductive choice."

What is behind these attitudes? By tradition, of course, parents have been responsible for the cost of their own children. Moreover, in recent times, widespread fear of and resentment at population growth has fostered the perception that parents are just another kind of selfish consumer, and that we would be better off with fewer of them—particularly if they are of another race or ethnic group. Thus, it seems to many people that any assistance parents receive in raising their children—public schools, tax credits, family allowances—is a form of subsidy. As the economist Nancy Folbre has lamented, the common notion is that children are like pets. "Parents acquire them because they provide companionship and love. Therefore, they should either take full responsibility for them, or drop them off at the pound." The analogy goes further in the popular mind. Just as dog owners are expected to use pooper scoopers, observe leash laws, and not ask for subsidies, parents are expected to potty-train their children, keep them quiet

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and well behaved, and let the joys of parenting be their own reward.

The problem with these attitudes is that they fail to account for the deepening dependency all people have on both the quantity and quality of other people's children. We live, to begin with, in an aging society. In this society, we have largely socialized the cost of aging through programs like Social Security and Medicare. The financing of these programs depends critically on each new generation being larger and better educated than the last. The American Social Security system, for instance, assumes that the number of workers paying into the system will increase by 30 percent over the next 80 years. And it assumes that our children and grandchildren will be enormously more productive than today's workers.

Yet we still leave it to individuals to bear (in both direct expenses and foregone wages) nearly all of the growing cost of raising the children who sustain the system, while allowing those individuals to retain a dwindling share of the value they create. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, a typical middle-class family will spend over $200,000 in direct expenses to raise a child born this year—not including the cost of college. Then there is the growing opportunity cost of raising children. A mother (or father) who stays at home or accepts a family-friendly, part-time job to be with the kids often sacrifices substantial income. Even for families with modest earning potential, the opportunity cost of raising a single child through age 18 can easily exceed $1 million.

All of us benefit hugely from such parental investment. What could you buy with your Social Security check, or your I.R.A.s for that matter, if everyone else in your generation had simply forgotten to have children or had failed to invest in them? Yet parents do not receive any greater pensions than non-parents for the sacrifices they make to raise and educate the future workers upon whom we will all depend in old age.

We also live in an increasingly knowledge-based economy in which the formation of human capital becomes increasingly essential to all sectors. Yet again, we leave the cost of amassing this human capital primarily in the hands of individual parents and low-paid caregivers and educators, nearly all of whom could vastly increase their incomes simply by getting out of the "nurturing business." Many are, as attested to by the high divorce rate, the growing shortage of caregivers and qualified teachers, and above all by the dwindling fertility of the American people. Birthrates among native-born Americans are now well below the levels needed to replace the population and are dropping precipitously among immigrants as well.

These two trends—the mounting costs of caring for a growing elderly population and the increasing importance of human capital to the economy—have fundamentally altered the economics of family life. To put it bluntly, childrearing is fast becoming a sucker's game. Though the psychic rewards remain, the economic returns to individual parents have largely disappeared, while the cost of parenthood is soaring. To those raised on fears of overpopulation, this may seem like a good thing. But a society that is consuming more human capital than it produces is clearly living beyond its means. Not only do the high costs and low rewards of parenthood imperil the future of Social Security, Medicare, and other entitlement programs, but they also undermine the very foundations of our economic system.

Where do doctors come from?

A hospital is a good place to start considering how this is so. More so than steel mills, hospitals require a high concentration of responsible workers and highly trained specialists. They require doctors whose formal education extends into their 30s. They require highly trained, multi-tasking nurses with adept social skills. They require administrators and bureaucrats who are masters of law, regulation, and data management. Even the low-skilled workers who distribute the hospital meals and disinfect the bedpans must be highly trustworthy, for if they do their job wrong, patients will die.

What is true of hospitals is also increasingly true for the workplace as a whole. The clear tendency of economic development is towards a more knowledge-based, networked economy in which decision-making and responsibility are increasingly necessary at lower levels. In such economies, children often remain economically dependent on their parents well into their own childbearing years because it takes that long to acquire the panoply of technical skills, credentials, social understanding, and personal maturity that more and more jobs now require. Conversely, the rising demand for higher education means that more and more people are not even done with school before their own fertility (or their partners') begins to decline.

The growing economic necessity of prolonged education is easily documented. In the United States, the wage advantage of people with 16 or more years of schooling over those with just a high-school diploma skyrocketed from about 45 percent in 1980 to more than 66 percent by 1990. Since then, the economy has been demanding an even more highly-educated workforce, as shown by the growing income gap between those with college degrees and those with graduate school education. In 1981, holders of advanced degrees (including M.B.A.s, M.D.s and J.D.s) as a group enjoyed no greater income than those with only a college education. By 1997, the economy rewarded advanced-degree holders with 34 percent more income than mere college graduates.

But where do these highly-educated professionals come from? Human capital does not just spring into being, nor is it simply a product of higher education. Doctors, for example, must first be born. Doctors must

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also, for many years, be swaddled, fed, and comforted—by someone. Prodigious human effort is further required to teach them to read their first sentence and to add their first sums. Indeed, teaching them to read almost always requires far more adult effort and pedagogical savvy than teaching them biochemistry, the latter of which is usually performed in large lecture halls by teaching assistants and junior faculty members. Moreover, because doctors must be trusted with highly technical life-and-death decisions, they had also better acquire a strong sense of morality, a balanced personality, sober habits of living, and discipline—all of which will most likely require vast commitments of time and money by parents and other nurturing adults.

Yet the adults who sacrifice the most to create and mold this precious human capital, whether they be dutiful parents, daycare workers, school teachers, camp counselors, or even college professors, retain only a small share of the value they create. Indeed, as a rule, the more involved one becomes in the nurturing of the next generation, the less compensation one is likely to receive. Those who devote themselves full time to raising their children receive no wages. Daycare workers take home less pay than hotel maids. Elementary school teachers could easily make more money as casino dealers. Camp counselors could raise their income by taking a cashier job at the mall. High school teachers would receive more money if they taught stock or real estate seminars. The highest-paid college professors are those who teach the least. Even among doctors, pediatricians generally receive far less compensation than specialists dealing with adult illness.

Or, to take another example, becoming a nursery-school teacher in most states requires one to have a minimum of an associate's degree with a major in childhood development, to have mastered a certification exam, and to have served as a student teacher. Nonetheless, the average annual wage of nursery school teachers in 2001 was just $20,940. By comparison, the average wage for animal trainers that year, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, was $27,280.

Does this disparity prove that teaching a dog to sit is more valuable to the economy than teaching the alphabet to a future worker? Clearly, it does not. Indeed, the opposite is true, and increasingly so: As the population ages, and as the economy makes ever more intensive use of human capital, those who work at forming this capital are ever more valuable to all members of society. Simply by having children, parents provide the raw material for tomorrow's workforce, as well as a brake on the aging of the overall population. Then parents, assisted by other caregivers and educators, transform this raw material, through a process that sometimes takes as long as 30 to 35 years, into the next generation of labor.

Elected officials love to talk about "family values" but shy away from proposing anything big or new that would actually help parents juggle the tasks of earning a living and raising a family. The only explanation seems to be that most voters—probably even most parents—don't think that those who nurture the next generation are unfairly burdened.

The returns to society—if not to individual parents, caregivers, and educators—are huge. Businesses receive an input of new workers who arrive on the labor market already endowed with unprecedented amounts of human capital, almost all of it formed and paid for by others—individual parents, who receive no compensation from their children's employers, as well as scores of caregivers and educators who could have earned far more money doing something else. As these new workers are also new consumers, businesses receive another benefit in the form of increased demand for their products. Governments, meanwhile, harvest an expanded tax base, allowing their beneficiaries, such as Social Security and Medicare recipients, to receive bigger benefits than they otherwise could. It's a wonderful system, but for how long can it continue if the cost of being a dutiful parent continues to grow? As more and more of the human race finds itself living under urban conditions in which children no longer provide any economic benefit to their parents, but are rather costly impediments to material success, people well adapted to this new environment will tend not to reproduce. And many others who are not so successful will imitate them, and for good reason.

The nurturing sector

Consider that in the past, parents bore the full cost of raising their children but also held on to most of the

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resulting return. How so? To begin with, children as young as 5 or 6 started paying dividends to the household economy by performing economically useful work such as tending farm animals, stitching clothes, gathering wood, or in the early industrial age, working in factories. Young children were particularly valuable in colonial America. In explaining the rapid economic growth in England's American colonies, Adam Smith noted in *The Wealth of Nations*: "Labor [in North America] is … so well-rewarded that a numerous family of children … is a source of opulence and prosperity to the parents. The value of children is the greatest of all encouragements to marriage. We cannot, therefore, wonder that the people in North America should generally marry very young."

As young adults, well-bred children also often benefited their parents by entering into strategically arranged marriages that brought new wealth and station to the extended family or secured alliances with rivals. Moreover, the majority of parents who were engaged in a common enterprise with their children, such as running a farm or craft shop, derived a direct and exclusive reward for whatever work skills they taught their children, or had others teach them. Finally, adult children provided their parents with at least the prospect of support in old age, which was then, for most people, nearly impossible to secure from any other source.

The system had many brutal features that no egalitarian would wish to replicate, but it did at least allow parents to reap what they sowed. Today's parents, by contrast, recapture little if any of the return created by their investment in children, even though they typically invest much more, and for much longer, than did parents in the past. At least in developed countries, the economy provides little opportunity for children to perform useful work, even in the rare circumstances in which it is legal. With the end of arranged marriages, few parents in developed countries make strategic gains from alliances with their children's in-laws; where they do so, it is simply by chance. Moreover, except in the now rare instances in which a son or daughter joins a family business, parents must now be content to see the job skills they provided for their children go not to the benefit of a common enterprise but to the benefit of employers outside the family.

In our knowledge-based economy, children often remain financially dependent on their parents well into their own childbearing years because it takes that long to acquire the panoply of technical skills, credentials, social understanding, and personal maturity that more and more jobs now require.

Finally, and just as importantly, parents no longer hold a unique claim on their children for support in old age. Instead, the state, primarily through programs like Social Security and Medicare, redistributes an ever-increasing share of the human capital parents create to all members of society.

As economist Shirley P. Burggraf has pointed out: "People who never have children; parents who neglect, abuse or abandon children; deadbeat parents who don't pay child support, all have as much claim (in many cases more) on the earning of the next generation through the Social Security System as do the most dutiful parents." Similarly, corporations that profit from skilled labor, or that sell to affluent consumers, appropriate the human capital created by parental investment, while paying parents nothing in return.

So, how is it that parents, caregivers, and educators continue to receive such a small share of the value they create? One explanation, of course, is that this is all overwhelmingly "women's work," and that, therefore, broad sectors of society (including men but also many women employed in the "masculine" economy) devalue it. Another factor, in my opinion, is that we (men and women alike) do not want parents or helping professionals to be "in it for the money." We want them to be motivated as much as possible by a genuine desire to serve others. Thus, the logic for offering them only minimal financial compensation or even status: It helps to ensure that the people who assume these roles will be disproportionately motivated by idealism, or so we hope.

Yet the low pay and low status of those involved in nurturing human capital is not a sustainable arrangement. The problem is not that parents as well as other caregivers and educators are any less idealistic than in the past. Arguably, those who continue to perform these roles are more idealistic than ever, since there are so many more opportunities available to them than in the past.

Instead, the problem is that the value created by the "nurturing sector" of the economy, if you will, is being taxed away to the point that it makes less and less sense

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for individuals to invest or participate in it, and so, increasingly, they don't. The initial result is a below-replacement-level fertility rate. The eventual result, if the trend continues to run its course, is an exhaustion of human capital—a harried, overworked society in which there are too few people to support the old or tend to the young.

Hit me!

What does this tax on nurture look like in day-to-day experience? A young woman faces a choice between becoming a nursery-school teacher, a vocation she admires but pays $7 an hour, and getting a license to be a casino dealer, a calling she finds less noble but that pays $20 an hour. Is society really trying to tell her that she'll add more value to the world as a casino dealer than as a teacher? No, nearly everyone (even high-rolling social conservatives like Bill Bennett) would agree that a qualified nursery-school teacher plays a more important social and economic role than does a qualified casino dealer. But the problem is, if a nursery school paid her $20 an hour to teach, few parents could afford the tuition, even if she proved to be extremely effective.

And why is that? It is in large measure because almost all of the economic return on that tuition would go not to the parents who paid it, but would be divvied up by society as whole 20 to 30 years later. If you send your child to a high-quality, high-cost nursery school, you may substantially increase the chances that your child will grow up to be a well-adjusted, highly-prized employee who pays lots of taxes. The same may well be true if you sacrifice your own wages to home-school the child. But either way, you will receive little or none of the economic return on your investment, which means you can afford to invest far less in your child than if an ever larger share of those returns were not appropriated by others.

The same relation applies to the cost of college and all child-related expenditures. Who would bet in a casino in which, even when you were lucky enough to hit the jackpot, you had to share the winnings with all the other customers? Maybe a few gamblers motivated by pride and the sheer joy of winning, but most gamblers would take their business elsewhere. The answer suggests one big reason why casinos offer better pay than nursery schools. Customers of both face long odds of success. But if you use your money to play in a casino, you get to keep what you win, while if you use your money to invest in your child's education, or even in the education of someone else's child, whatever economic returns follow wind up being shared by everyone. Under these terms, customers will push money at casinos to the point of casinos becoming highly profitable. But nursery schools almost never enjoy a surplus because the value they create is too diffuse. Parents are repaid, if ever, only with pride and joy.

Fortunately, there are still many parents for whom pride and joy in their children is enough. Fortunately, too, even as the percentage of voters who are parents declines, the public is still willing to bear the cost of public education, even if it still resists any entitlement to preschool. Yet looking to the future, we can anticipate that even as demand for human capital continues to increase, this very process will threaten its own supply.

Missing children

The overwhelming reason America is becoming an aging society is not because people are living substantially longer than in the past. Since 1950, life expectancy at age 65 has increased by just 3.45 years in the United States, and for women, it has actually declined slightly since the early 1990s. Instead, the primary reason there are fewer and fewer workers to support each retiree is that the birthrate has dropped precipitously over the last generation.

In 2002, the "crude" birth rate in the United States as a whole, or the number of babies born for every 1,000 U.S. residents, reached a record low, having declined by 17 percent since 1990. This trend is primarily due to the aging of population, which leaves fewer women of reproductive age, and to an increase in the number of women delaying motherhood until their late 30s or early 40s, when the chances of infertility are high. The last year in which white Americans had enough children to replace themselves was 1971. Fertility rates among blacks meanwhile are falling faster than among any other racial or ethnic group, with the average African-American woman now bearing only .1 child more than the average white woman. Because infant mortality is some 137 percent higher among blacks than whites, and life expectancy at all ages is shorter, the black population of the United States is probably not creating enough babies to reproduce itself.

Among major ethnic and racial groups, only Hispanics are still reproducing above replacement levels, and that is primarily because of the comparatively high fertility of recent arrivals, who are themselves having fewer children. Nationally, the average Hispanic woman of childbearing age produces fewer and fewer children each year, the rate per thousand having dropped by more than 10 percent since 1990. A continued increase in the percentage of women going to college or graduate school, as well as continued social and economic progress for African Americans and Hispanic Americans, could well push this rate down further. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, "A woman's educational level is the best predictor of how many children she will have." Declining fertility among Hispanic women in California, which is driven primarily by gains in educational attainment, have put the state on a course in which it could easily see its population of children aged 0-10 decline by 585,000 between 2000 and 2010.

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What are the economic consequences? Falling fertility, to be sure, offers many benefits—at least at first. As the relative number of children declines, so does the burden of their dependency, thereby freeing up more resources for investment and adult consumption. The general improvement in America's economic performance since the 1970s has been due in part to the era's low fertility. Fewer babies meant there were more women available to work for wages. Similarly, the "middle aging" of America that occurred in the 1990s helped increase the average wage and measured productivity growth, as a rising percentage of the population aged into years in which most individuals are at the peak of their job performance and earning power.

Yet even if declining fertility rates can bring a "demographic dividend," that dividend eventually has to be repaid. At first there are fewer children to feed, clothe, and educate, leaving more resources for adults to enjoy. But soon enough, if fertility continues to remain below replacement levels, there are fewer productive workers as well, while there are also more and more dependent elderly, who each consume far more resources than children do. Even after considering the cost of education, a typical child in the United States consumes 28 percent less than the typical working-age adult, while elders consume 27 percent more, mostly in health-related expenses.

Eventually, as the pool of potential mothers diminishes, and as young people find more and more of their income going to support the old, both population loss and economic stagnation become nearly inevitable. Younger workers, finding not only that the economy requires them to have far higher levels of education than did their parents, but also that they must pay far higher payroll taxes, are less able to afford children and so have fewer of them, causing a new cycle of population aging. This in turn requires still more taxes to finance, thereby making the cost of children even less affordable, while also further diminishing the economy's ability to provide jobs for those young people that are left. Today, due largely to the crushing cost of pensions and health care, the oldest countries of "old Europe," such as Spain and Italy, have economies that produce double-digit youth unemployment rates, despite a theoretical shortage of youth. In Japan, the combination of a rapidly growing older population and a dwindling supply of new workers has caused what Yamada Masahiro of Tokyo Gakugei University has called "low birth rate recession"—which has now lasted for more than a decade and that could grow much worse as the population of Japan contracts in absolute numbers.

Adding to the viciousness of the aging cycle is a gradual loss of innovation and entrepreneurialism. In 2002, for example, Babson College and the London School of Business released their latest index of entrepreneurial activity by country which shows a distinct correlation between a nation's high ratio of workers to retirees and a high degree of entrepreneurship. Thus, for example, India and China, which stand among the most entrepreneurial countries on earth, deploy roughly five people of working age for every person of retirement age. Meanwhile, Japan and France rank among the world's least entrepreneurial nations, displaying some of the lowest worker-to-retiree ratios. Countries such as the United States, Canada, Italy, and Germany have levels of entrepreneurial activity that correlate closely to the ages of their populations.

Many factors may go into this correlation. One, of course, may be that aging workers and investors tend to be less flexible and more risk averse. Both common sense and a vast literature in finance and psychology support the claim that as we approach old age, we become more reluctant to take risks with our careers and nest eggs. It is not surprising, therefore, that aging countries such as Japan, Italy, and France are marked by exceptionally low rates of job turnover and by exceptionally conservative use of capital.

Because prudence suggests that older investors take less risk with their investments, we can expect that as populations age, investor preference will shift toward safer bonds and bank deposits and away from speculative stocks and venture funds. As populations age further, we can expect an ever higher share of citizens to be cashing out their investments and spending down their savings, neither trend being consistent with a future marked by high levels of high-risk investment in new technology.

We must also consider the huge public deficits projected for major industrialized countries over the next several decades. The mounting costs of pensions and health care will bring government R&D expenditures and educational spending under increasing budgetary pressure. Moreover, massive government borrowing could easily crowd out capital that would otherwise be available to the private sector for investment in new technology. Projections by the Center for Strategic and International Studies show, for example, that today's old-age benefit promises will eventually consume an additional 12 percent of GDP a year in the typical developed country. As CSIS reports: "Were these imbalances permitted to accumulate, by the mid-2020s, budget deficits in the rich countries would consume all of their savings, making them dependent on capital flows from the Third World to fund domestic investment. Long before this happens, of course, capital shortages and default risks would spill over and disrupt growth everywhere."

Ideological cocktail

Under these circumstances, one might imagine that liberals and conservatives would be scrambling to come up with new policies to encourage fertility and ease the burden on families, yet instead, both camps remain mired in a 30-year culture war that ignores the new real-

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ities of global aging. On the one side, of course, we meet the objections from religious and social conservatives wary of working mothers and viewing daycare and other social services that might benefit working parents as an encroachment by the "nanny state." Thunders *National Review* editor Richard Lowry: "The mass entry of women into the workforce has acted to dissolve the family in general." Neoconservative intellectual Francis Fukuyama warns that "substantial empirical evidence links higher female earnings to both divorce and extramarital childbearing." There are also plenty of people who object to the idea that they should have to pay more taxes so that dual-income yuppies or Murphy Brown-type single moms can have an entitlement to free daycare. When not making their case on moral grounds, they cite an avalanche of studies on the health and developmental risks to children in daycare. Business interests, meanwhile, consistently oppose any mandate that would require them to pay parents who need time off to take care of an infant or a sick family member.

The culture wars over work and family result in today's tough bargain for parents: Everyone who wants to may join the paid labor force, but almost no one gets a family wage or enough help from government to defray the costs of raising children.

The anti-natalism of the Left is just as important in explaining the status quo. Many early socialists and feminists put great emphasis on promoting family life and on getting the state to relieve mothers of part of their risks and burdens. Yet by the 1960s, the idea that mothers should be rewarded for giving "a citizen to the nation" was already coming to seem dangerously outdated. Betty Friedan set the tone of the modern feminist movement when, in the first chapter of *The Feminine Mystique*, she tellingly fretted about the ongoing "population explosion." She then famously went on to describe how the typical American mother was smothering her children and helping to create a "comfortable concentration camp" that made both sexes neurotic.

Since then, Friedan's argument that over-mothering was causing male homosexuality to spread "like murky smog over the American landscape" has lost resonance on the Left. But her general critique, that motherhood should not be a woman's highest calling or priority, has not lost its following. And so the preoccupations of modern feminism, and of the Left in general for the last generation, have been with issues of personal liberation, birth control, abortion, and access to the market economy.

Accordingly, the idea that either mothers or fathers deserve unique compensations and protections has dropped off the progressive agenda. Instead, with rare exceptions, today's Left has joined with market libertarians in de-romanticizing motherhood and family life, while at the same time sharing a celebration of hyper-individualism and maximum competition in labor markets. This ideological cocktail relieves capitalists from having to pay anyone a family wage, as they more than happily watch working mothers and fathers scapegoat each other over who is now responsible for the children.

And so the culture wars over work and family result in today's tough bargain for parents: Everyone who wants to may join the paid labor force, but almost no one gets a family wage or enough help from government to defray the costs of raising children. Employers, and the majority of citizens who are not actively involved in raising children, benefit from this status quo, which is why, no doubt, it has continued for so long. Dutiful parents do not benefit, which is why there are fewer of them.

Yet as we have seen, in the long term, the cost of this bargain is not just the harried, downwardly-mobile life faced by most of today's parents. A falling birthrate and an aging population have consequences for every member of society that will soon become more and more apparent. The context of the debate over work and family today is a world in which most people still view population growth with alarm, and simply take it for granted that large numbers of mothers and other caregivers will always be available to raise children for little or no wages. But these mass opinions will shift, and probably quite rapidly, as the reality of aging sets in. The critical moment will probably come in the next decade, as millions of Baby Boomers start crashing past the boundaries of old age, and as today's teenagers find themselves saddled with massive student loans, rising taxes, and growing frustration over the increasing difficulty of forming or affording a family. It is none too soon to begin thinking about how the politics of work and family will then change, and about what policies could save the day.

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Veterans of household wars

What might such solutions look like? One way to short-circuit the current culture war debate would be to propose substantial tax relief and extra benefits to married parents who successfully raise their children. For example, consider this bargain? Have one child, and the payroll taxes you pay (and which your employer nominally pays) drop by one-third. A second child is worth a two-thirds reduction. Have three or more children, and never pay payroll taxes again until your youngest child turns 18. When it comes time to retire, your Social Security benefit (and your spouse's) will be calculated just as if you had both been contributing the maximum Social Security tax during the period in which you were raising children, provided that all your children have graduated from high school. For most parents, this would mean an increase in Social Security benefits over what they would receive today. To pay for it all, benefits to non-parents would have to be reduced.

The idea that parents deserve unique compensations and protections has dropped off the progressive agenda. Today's Left has joined with market libertarians in de-romanticizing family life, while celebrating hyper-individualism and maximum competition in labor markets.

Notice first that the proposal would at least reduce the "double taxation" parents face under the Social Security system. The system appropriates much of the human capital parents create by investing in their children and then requires them to contribute payroll taxes as well. The proposal offers an equitable remedy for this double burden. Notice, too, that this proposal is of no benefit to households in which no one works. It does not create an incentive to have a child just to get a check, as the old welfare system used to. At least one parent must be holding down a job with taxable income for this tax relief to be of value, and the same is true if one is to receive a higher retirement benefit.

Notice, also, that this proposal does not create a vast new child welfare bureaucracy, nor allow government to dictate what is the best way to raise a child. Instead, it puts more resources in the hands of individual parents, who decide for themselves how best to raise their children. This means that the family with a stay-at-home mom doesn't have to pay extra taxes just so the dual-income yuppie couple across the street can be entitled to free daycare. But neither do two-paycheck families wind up having to pay extra taxes to support the stay-at-home mom with any kind of government check. Instead, all parents receive a substantial increase in household income, which they can then use to pay for more, and higher quality, childcare and education —if they like, or just to compensate themselves for the income they forgo by staying home with the children.

Of course, it would be foolish to suppose that money alone can explain a question as subtle and mysterious as what motivates human beings to procreate and invest in their children. Sweden, in the early 1990s, did manage to boost its fertility rates by offering more generous family allowances, but has since seen births drop far below replacement levels, as well as an explosion in single-parent households. Equally crucial is a cultural recognition of the increasingly critical role dutiful parents and other caregivers play in sustaining the human capital of an aging society. No, we don't need to put mothers up on pedestals or reinvent paterfamilias. But as in the case of military service, it makes a big difference if society recognizes (not just with money, but also with prestige) the sacrifices individual parents make on all our behalf.

Government mandates that reservists not lose their jobs when they are called to duty and offers them free health care and pensions. Only the churlish consider these benefits to be a subsidy or suggest that patriotism should be its own reward. Yet when it comes to guaranteeing that parents don't lose their jobs for doing their duty, too often we are told that this is just another form of welfare or affirmative action.

In reality, both soldiering and nurturing children are vital forms of public service. One is a traditionally male calling and the other female, which may well explain why veterans enjoy a panoply of benefits and their own cabinet-level agency, while mothers don't. But in the long run, both roles are vital to a nation's survival, with the new realities created by aging and the deepening demand for human capital formation making successful parenting all the more so. A society that fails to recognize, much less honor, its debts to those who form the next generation may expect to vanish. ◆

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Meanwhile in Ankara

The real hope for spreading democracy in the Middle East isn't Iraq—it's Turkey.

By Grenville Byford

Less than a year ago, as the United States hurtled toward war in Iraq, the White House found itself in an acrimonious battle with longtime NATO ally Turkey. For more than half a century, the Turks had been a vital ally at the intersection of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. During that period, Turkey had usually been a democracy, but an imperfect one. The Turkish military frequently interfered in the political process on behalf of its version of secular, pro-Western values. But on the eve of the war in Iraq, the Turks had a new government. The Justice and Development Party, led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, had swept to power on promises of economic reform and greater democracy. Self-described as "conservative democrats," the new government was dominated by pious Muslims and struggled to rid itself of the "Islamist" label, and its negative connotations.

The United States leaned hard on the Turks to allow 40,000 to 60,000 American troops onto Turkish soil to push into Iraq from the North. And the new government did ultimately put the necessary but highly unpopular legislation before Turkey's parliament, which balked. Despite public words to the effect that they respected Turkish democracy, the Bush administration's anger was obvious. Since then, tempers have cooled. Most recently, the Turkish government responded positively to the U.S. request for 10,000 peace keepers in Iraq and gained approval from parliament. The United States, however, promptly disinvited the troops under pressure from various Iraqi groups in January. In what little publicity this visit received, it was billed as "fence-mending."

Such lack of media interest is a shame. As the Muslim leader of a real democracy, Erdogan is potentially a figure of historic significance. The Bush administration says that democracy is the juju which will fix the Middle East. Yet the steady progress of Ayatollah Sistani toward center stage in Iraq illustrates how difficult it is to implant democracy without the backing of Islam. Whether Sistani is a devoted democrat or a sly defender of his religious faction in Iraq remains to be seen. What's clear is that positive change in the lands of Islam is far more likely to occur if Islam itself becomes a party to these changes rather than an obstacle. Prime Minister Erdogan is a pious Muslim who also believes in democracy and human rights, including gender equality. Terrorism cannot be Islamic, he says, because "Islam never supports terrorism." But the practice is supported by at least some self-described Muslims. If Erdogan can win his fellow Muslims over to his view of Islam, there is a real chance for democracy to flourish and terrorism to decline throughout the Muslim world. The aim of U.S. policy must, therefore, be to find ways to

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help Erdogan—and people like him—acquire the stature that they need to be persuasive. Given a powerful advocate, history suggests that changing how Muslims view their religion is not a hopeless task.

Religious evolution

Today we take it for granted that the Christian societies of medieval Western Europe have developed into the modern world. Their Jewish citizens contributed to this development once emancipation gave them the opportunity to do so, not least by founding the state of Israel as a modern, liberal democracy. But modernity is not an obvious product of Christianity or Judaism. It is, rather, derived from the ideas of individual Christians and Jews, ideas which have slowly become accepted by the majority of their co-religionists. Galileo, remember, narrowly avoided the fiery death of a heretic. Only later did Christians decide that a heliocentric universe was consistent with their faith.

For the past 400 years, most Christians have chosen to change their beliefs and adapt to modernity rather than reject it. The Jews who have left the Orthodox synagogue for the Reform and Conservative movements have made similar choices. Christianity and Judaism manage to co-exist with modernity because their believers have chosen doctrinal evolution. Although modernity is itself a slippery concept, in broad terms we can say that most modern societies join America's founding fathers in holding certain truths to be self-evident, "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." And the term "men" has evolved, too. Today, modern nations grant citizenship and equal rights—at least in principle—to women and minorities, as well. Add to political liberty the protection of property rights and you have the essence of "The West," though this is no longer exclusively Western: Japan, the only historically non-Christian society to be unambiguously part of the First World, has largely adopted these same beliefs, albeit within the context of a strikingly different culture. Aspirant nations such as South Korea and Singapore are steadily moving in the same direction.

More than anything else, modernity is a belief system. Founded on a bedrock of respect for individuals and their rights, it embraces change and scientific reasoning, but does not necessarily reject religion. Modern societies not only adopt new technologies, they also create them. Merely using the Internet or cell phones does not make a society modern. Having a mindset that stimulates the creation of such things does. And, though not identical, the quality which all modern societies have in common is that they work—and are widely seen to do so. The modern societies of Western Europe and the United States are inundated with economic and political migrants precisely because these societies offer their citizens—and would-be citizens—security and the prospect of prosperity and personal fulfillment. Nowhere outside the charmed modern circle are such things on offer to the same extent.

Though not identical, the quality which all modern societies have in common is that they work—and are widely seen to do so. The modern societies of Western Europe and the United States are inundated with economic and political migrants precisely because these societies offer their citizens—and would-be citizens—security and the prospect of prosperity and personal fulfillment.

Catholic schooling

The first step in Christianity's evolution was Europe's Protestant Reformation. Prior to the middle of the 16th century, the Pope's authority in Western Europe was unchallenged, at least in principle. Dissent was actively discouraged, heretics burned. Then, in the space of a hundred years, many Christians chose to believe something different. Whether the beliefs of these Protestants were in some dispassionate, academic sense the proper interpretation of Christ's message, or even whether they were easier to justify than the doctrines of Rome, is not important. What counted was that those rallying to the new Protestant churches had made a conscious choice to reject their former beliefs and embrace new ones. And yet, they insisted, they remained good Christians—better Christians, in fact, than their Catholic coreligionists.

But it was not theology alone that made the Reformation significant. In short order, the technical and commercial center of Europe moved decisively North. The newly Protestant societies of England, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Northern Germany started to become rich. And wealth made them influential. Following on from the Reformation came the Enlightenment, which encompassed the long retreat of organized religion in the face of rational scientific argument, not to mention the publication of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* and Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, as well as the founding of the United States. Organized Christianity however, did not create these revolutionary changes. That was the work of individual Christians. Christianity merely adapted.

Judaism evolved, too. Almost immediately after the

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emancipation of the Jews, the second decade of the 19th century saw the establishment of the first reformed synagogues. Like Martin Luther, they introduced the vernacular into religious services. Other reforms followed; only traditions "adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization," as the Pittsburgh Platform of 1885 put it, were to be retained. It was because such adaptations continued that modern Israel came to be founded.

Religious evolution is what has permitted Christianity and Judaism to co-exist with the modern world. In both traditions, change has been proposed by individuals but ratified by their coreligionists. What has permitted the proponents of change to function is that both the Bible and the Torah are long on inspiration but short on clarity. They are open to reinterpretation. Most believers, however, are not equipped to deal with theological niceties or much interested in them. The rank and file are utilitarians. They adopt proposals that offer a better way of living with both God and Mammon. In religious and biological evolution, successful innovations share one characteristic: They work.

Keeping the faith

The basic preconditions that have permitted Christianity and Judaism to evolve are also present in Islam. Muslims ultimately derive the law, as well as broad ethical principles, from two sources: the Quran and the Hadiths, anecdotes concerning the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad. Three things about these sources are important. First, there is considerable latitude for interpretation of the texts, forcing believers to emphasize certain ideas or beliefs over others. Second, the Quran and Hadiths are not necessarily of uniform weight. The whole Quran is rated above the Hadiths, though some Quranic verses are held to have been abrogated by later ones, while some among the Hadith are better authenticated than others. Third, neither text explicitly deals with complications arising from new technology, such as whether women should be allowed to drive cars.

Hence, the development of legal and ethical codes to govern everyday life required human reasoning. During the first two centuries of Muslim rule (8th and 9th centuries C.E.), such reasoning, known as "Ijtihad," was quite wide-ranging. What we know today as doctrinal Islam developed largely during this period. As in Western Europe during the Reformation, Muslim thinkers pondered deeply how much weight they should give to the conclusions of earlier scholars—that is, whether to favor precedent or original thinking. On one side of the debate were the Mu'tazilites, a theological school, influenced by the Greek philosophers, which favored a more humanistic—that is, "modern"—approach to Islam. But those who believed that human reason had little or no place in religion won out. Precedent triumphed over reasoning and progressively restricted the purview of Ijtihad. In common parlance, the "Gates of Ijtihad" closed, and over the years Islam became ossified. There are exceptions, however. And their existence tells us that Islam retains the capacity to evolve.

Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab lived in Arabia during the 18th century. He objected to practices which had been absorbed into Islam and become traditional, such as making pilgrimages to saints' tombs. This, he argued, was polytheistic since it amounted to worshipping the saint rather than God. The answer was a return to the austere and simple religion—as he imagined it—of Muhammad, his companions, and the first few generations of Muslims. Any practice not found in either the Quran or Hadiths was to be forbidden as innovation . Any Muslim who indulged in such practices was to be denounced as an infidel and killed. Ironically, this was itself somewhat of an innovation. Unlike many Christian sects, Muslims had hitherto not been enthusiastic about branding others as heretics.

Having been expelled by a number of rulers at the behest of the religious establishment, al-Wahhab was finally taken in by Muhammad Ibn Sa'ud, a local potentate who declared holy war on those who would not subscribe to al-Wahhab's teaching. In 1773, the two conquered the principality of Riyadh. The House of Sa'ud rules there today and remains firmly allied with al-Wahhab's religious successors. Fueled by Saudi oil money, the Wahhabi (more properly, if less commonly in Western parlance, called Salafis) have become the missionaries of the Muslim world. In the 200 years since al-Wahhab's death however, time has stood still for his followers. Insulated at first by the Arabian desert, and later by a

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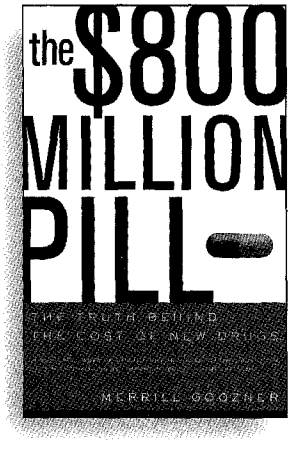

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flood of petrodollars, the Wahhabi have built nothing on the intellectual foundations laid by their founder. Ironically, they have fallen under the spell of tradition and precedent, albeit not the same traditions al-Wahhab inveighed against. Many of Wahhab's puritan teachings bore certain similarities to those of Cromwell's 17th century supporters in England and their cousins in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. But by contrast with Wahhab's descendants, Christian puritans on both sides of the Atlantic rapidly reached an accommodation with modernity.

Muhammad Abduh was born in Eypt in the mid-19th century. Confronted by the reality of British imperial power, he sought to forge a new compact between Islam and the modern world. Educated at al-Azhar—then, as now, the most respected institute of learning in the Muslim world—Abduh rejected mere pan-Islamic solidarity as a response to colonialism, believing that solidarity itself was insufficient unless Islam forged a new relationship with modernity. Abduh wanted to equip Muslims to take their place in the modern world and yet retain their core beliefs. As God had created man with the ability to reason, he believed, the product of reason must therefore be consistent with revelation. It is a conclusion that most post-Enlightenment Christians would endorse for their own religion, yet Abduh reached it as a Muslim theologian and legal expert. Indeed, he rose to be rector of al-Azhar for the last six years of his life, a period during which he became friendly with the British proconsul and effective ruler of Egypt, Lord Cromer. But Abduh's friendship with Cromer had the effect of discrediting him and his ideas in the eyes of the nationalist movements which arrived on the scene after his death.

More recently, the most politically influential Muslim theologian has been Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini. His contribution was a doctrine called "the rule of the religiously learned." A proper Muslim society, Khomeini held, should conduct itself in line with God's will as expressed in the Quran and the Hadith. But since only the religiously learned could be trusted to interpret these correctly, only they should rule. The success of the Islamic revolution he fathered made him the face of Islam for much of the West—oddly so, for his thinking departed from Muslim tradition, which has generally separated the ruler from the religiously learned. Khomeini, however, triumphed not because he won the theological argument, but because he offered Iran's disillusioned proletariat and frustrated middle class a way forward: An end to the Shah's despotic, corrupt, and pro-American regime. More recently, however, the pendulum has swung back. Iranian President Muhammad Khatami and even Khomeini's grandson, Ahmad, have mounted strong theological arguments against religious rule. More importantly, Khomeini's version of Islam has failed at a practical level. Iran's economy has stagnated, its youth are unemployed and frustrated. Khomeini's ideas have failed the key evolutionary test: They do not work.

Society of friends

Islam, then, like Christianity and Judaism, possesses evolutionary mechanisms. It also appears that Muslims, like Christians and Jews, are drawn to what works. Wahhabism is Saudi Arabia's religion today because the Sa'ud family and its followers rode it to success. If it had failed before the gates of Riyadh in 1773, it would have relapsed into obscurity. (One wonders how it would have survived without the oil money that has hitherto masked Saudi Arabia's economic sterility.) Khomeini's ideas succeeded in the first place because they offered the chance to get rid of the Shah. Abduh, by contrast, showed no sign of being able to kick out the British.

Wahhab and Khomeini, of course, offered their prescriptions as a reaction against modernity rather than an adaptation to it. But this is not unique to Islam. America's Christian evangelical movement is strikingly similar, with its call for a literalist interpretation of the Bible and rejection of modern, post-'60s mores; the Reverend Pat Robertson and Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab would have much to talk about. Some of Israel's religious extremists are not so very different in approach.

The theological legacy of Muhammad Abduh, however, has not proven entirely barren. There are Muslim theologians today who believe that the "Gates of Ijtihad" are emphatically not closed, that Ijtihad is not only a practical response to the challenges of modernity, but also a religious obligation. Some live in Turkey and the rest of the Muslim world, but many are Muslims who have taken up residence in the United States and West-

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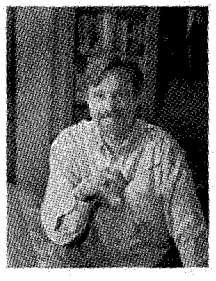

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ern Europe. The hope of creating modern democratic governments in the Muslim world rests more with these scholars than those who seek to transplant political democracy without addressing Islam.

Traditional Muslim scholars rely chiefly on two sorts of analysis of the Quran and the Hadith in reasoning about religion. The first is trying to understand which Hadith are more authoritative, essentially by evaluating the chain of transmission between the Prophet and the scholar who originally decided that the Hadith was genuine. Failing an authenticated Hadith which bears on the issue, the second tool, analogy, is then brought into play. They also consider important the consensus of the first Muslims and the need to respect the opinions of earlier adepts.

Modernist scholars do not reject these tools, but they make two emendations. First, they do not accept that a consensus of the first believers is necessarily more significant than a consensus among today's Muslims, especially where the early consensus is only related to today's issues by analogy. Second, they emphasize a form of contextual analysis, which, though traditional, has never been widely practiced. Such analysis evaluates whether an interpretation of a Quranic verse or Hadith is consistent with the whole corpus of Islam. So, for example, some scholars might argue that an important theme running through both the Quran and ahadith is "Justice" and the overriding need to behave justly, even towards unbelievers. Since it cannot be just to treat women as second-class citizens, it follows that gender equality is consistent with Islam. This is no doubt a simplistic summary of a complex process of reasoning, and indeed, the fact that contextual analysis lends itself so easily to simplistic logic is why tradition has restricted its use so severely. The point is that some Muslim scholars are now using the traditional tools of their trade to develop some very untraditional approaches to their religion.

Just as importantly, these theologians have their practical champions. Prominent among them is Turkey's present government, led by Erdogan. Some Turks think that the Justice and Development Party's true aim is to undermine their secular state and replace it with an Islamist one. Erdogan and his colleagues, however, say they are "conservative democrats" who happen to be Muslims. At the recent Organization of Islamic States Conference, Abdullah Gül, Turkey's foreign minister and a pious Muslim, said "I decline to see Islam and modernization as competing concepts." The evidence to date strongly suggests that Erdogan and Gül mean what they say. If so, they are the first Muslim government in the last 500 years to seek a radically new compact between their religion and the demands of modernity.

Fertile crescent

It is now a cliché to say that we face a "clash of civilizations" between the Muslim world and the West—that is, the Judeo-Christian West. Yet this fails the first test of a cliché: It is simply not true. The clash we risk is between the Muslim world and a modernity with which Judaism and Christianity have already made their peace. The question of our time is whether Islam will do likewise.

If Islam can be led to adapt to modernity, its extremists—today's terrorists—will be obliged to become peaceful, just like believers on all but the wildest fringes of Christianity and Judaism. If the Islamists remain violent, they will become isolated, and isolation means ideological death. Neither Yigal Amir, the assassin of Yitzhak Rabin, nor Paul Hill, the Christian minister executed in the United States for the murder of an abortion doctor and his driver, excite much sympathy even among their fellow extremists, let alone mainstream Jews or Christians. By contrast, Osama bin Laden is widely admired among ordinary Muslims, though the vast majority of them were appalled by the events of September 11.

But as unbelievers, Western governments and citizens lack standing to argue in favor of Islam making its peace with modernity. The solution is not so much to embrace Muslims like Tayyip Erdogan—too close an embrace will discredit those we seek as allies. It is, rather, to help them become successful. Only when they have provided their people with prosperity and security, validating reformist Islam, will they have the standing to move the Muslim world. (Who would listen to Warren Buffet's folksy wisdom if he was poor?) Like ordinary Christians and Jews before them, most Muslims have little interest in abstract argument. Show them a new theology that works, however, and they will pay attention.

What the West can do to help Erdogan deliver prosperity to his people is to shepherd Turkey's entrance into the European Union. And the hardest part of getting Turkey into the European Union will be creating a lasting peace settlement in northern Cyprus, which Turkey's troops have occupied since 1974, after a Greek-inspired coup and in direct contravention of U.N. resolutions. Fortunately, under Erdogan, the Turkish government is cooperating as never before to bring a peace settlement to Cyprus, the two sides on the island have finally agreed to a plan put forth by the U.N. If the Bush administration can help bring this peace deal to fruition, it will be doing more to aid Muslim reform and promote democracy than anything we have yet accomplished in Iraq.

But to help Erdogan and his like succeed, America will have to learn to postpone gratification. The Muslim modernists are not on "our side"; they have their own agenda, and, therefore, they will not support the United States in everything we wish to do. Indeed, their domestic politics may oblige them to oppose America's wishes on occasion. In the long run, though, their success in the struggle for the soul of Islam is the only thing that will enable us all to live together. ◆

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Hire Ed

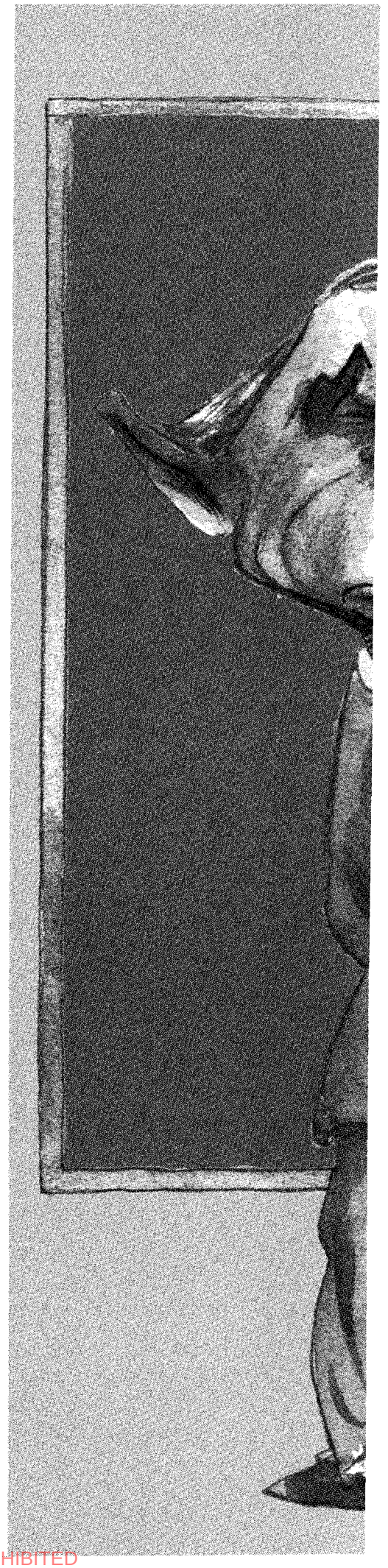
The secret to making Bush's school reform law work? More bureaucrats.

By Marc S. Tucker and Thomas Toch

In 2001, when the Bush administration and Congress were fashioning the No Child Left Behind Act, arguably the most sweeping federal school reform legislation in U.S. history, they used a handful of innovative states as models. One of them was California. Indeed, by the time the president signed NCLB in early 2002, California had already had in place for several years many of the accountability measures the new law mandated. The state sets high standards for what all California students should know at each grade level. It requires statewide tests to measure the performance of students and schools against those standards. And it helps turn around those schools that don't make the grade.

Marc S. Tucker is president of the National Center on Education and the Economy, a Washington-based non-profit that consults with states and provides technical assistance and staff development to districts and schools. **Thomas Toch** is director of the NCEE Policy Forums program and a frequent contributor to *The Washington Monthly.*

Art by ***Steve Brodner***



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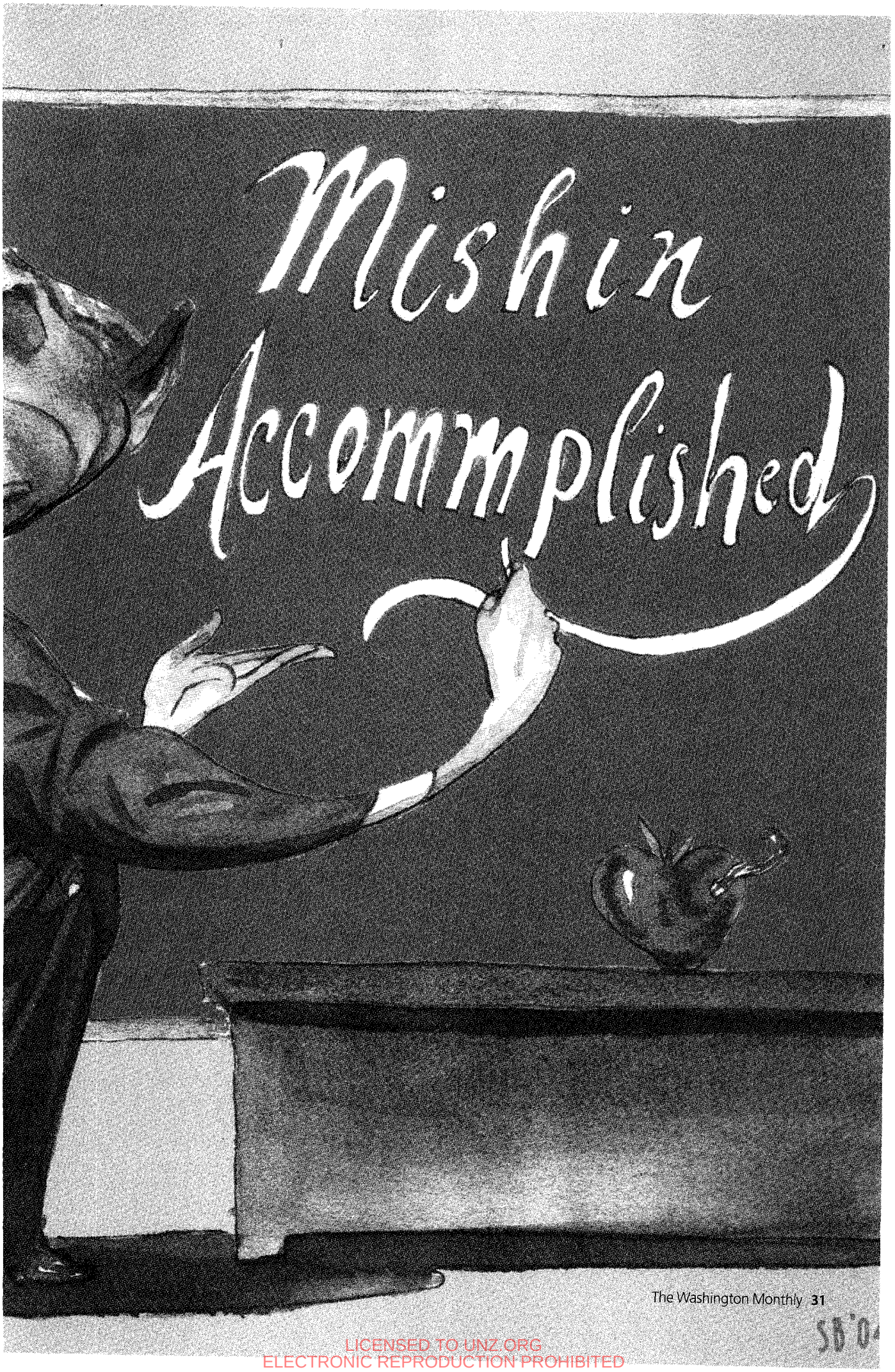

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You might expect, then, that California would have been in a good position to handle a key NCLB provision, that each state rank the proficiency of each of its schools. Instead, when that provision kicked in last year, California stumbled. The agency in charge of the task, the California Department of Education, gave failing grades to schools that were actually decent performers, and passing grades to schools that were, in fact, failing. By the time the department realized the errors, it had already released the rankings to the media. The department quickly pulled the lists from its Web site, prompting a flurry of newspaper corrections, as papers across the state retracted stories they had run days earlier. "It was chaos," says Bill Padia, who heads the department's policy and evaluation division.

The problem, it turned out, was that the law required the policy and evaluation division to make the calculations much faster than it had ever done before, using an assessment formula many times more complex than it was used to. Padia's office simply didn't have the capacity to rank, in a matter of days, 9,000 schools with 6.3 million student test scores broken into the dozens of different categories required by NCLB. Making matters worse, California, like many other states, was in the midst of a financial crisis; Padia's staff had been cut by more than one-quarter the previous year. And because the NCLB law has begun to create intense demand for a limited pool of experienced and knowledgeable testing experts, some of Padia's best people had been poached by testing companies and affluent school systems that could offer higher salaries. Once two-thirds of his 31 staffers had held doctorates, but by the time of the NCLB debacle last summer, only two did, one of whom was Padia himself.

Similar problems have surfaced in a host of other states, from Florida to New Hampshire to Idaho. In December, Illinois' state education agency acknowledged that it had mislabeled at least 300 schools under NCLB. Connecticut discovered that the private firm scoring its tests made so many errors that the state had to halt publication of its school ratings. Michigan had to delay issuing schools report cards for months as it struggled to meld federal scoring requirements with its existing evaluation system, a common problem in many states. When the cards arrived, few Michigan parents could understand them.

All over America, parents, educators, and politicians are in an uproar over NCLB, a law Bush has been hoping to run on in '04 as the signature example of his "compassionate conservative" philosophy. During the early Democratic primaries, presidential candidates competed with each other to denounce the law—even though many of them, including Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) and John Edwards (D-N.C.), had voted for it. Yet the anger at NCLB is now as bipartisan as its support once was. In January, the Republican-controlled Virginia House of Delegates voted overwhelmingly to ask Congress to exempt their state from the law. Last month, as a protest against NCLB, Utah's Republican-led legislature voted to spend no state money implementing the law.

To some extent, the backlash against NCLB isn't surprising. For decades, state and local governments that control public education in America have allowed thousands of low-quality schools to go on, year after year, providing substandard education to millions of students, especially poor and minority students. NCLB is the first serious attempt by Washington to hold states, districts, and schools accountable for remedying the situation. Little wonder that many are rebelling on behalf of the status quo.

But there is more to the backlash than hidebound resistance to change. Teachers and parents legitimately complain, for instance, that the simplistic, largely multiple-choice tests that many states use lead to a dumbing down of what's taught in the classroom. Such problems are beginning to be aired in the media and may well be dealt with by Congress. But there is another problem, little discussed, which if not dealt with could undermine the nation's entire school reform effort. As the California testing fiasco shows, the state agencies that NCLB relies on to carry out its sweeping mandates simply don't have the capacity to do so. Like 220 volts of current being forced through a 110-volt kitchen appliance, the system is becoming overloaded, and the smoke is rising.

And if these agencies are overmatched now, just wait. Identifying failing schools is, in fact, one of the least demanding, of the law's rolling mandates. Students in schools that don't make the grade must be given the option of transferring to another, better public school. Then they must be provided "supplemental services," like private tutoring. If the schools' scores still don't improve, then the state must directly intervene. "Each state," the law declares, "shall establish a statewide sys-

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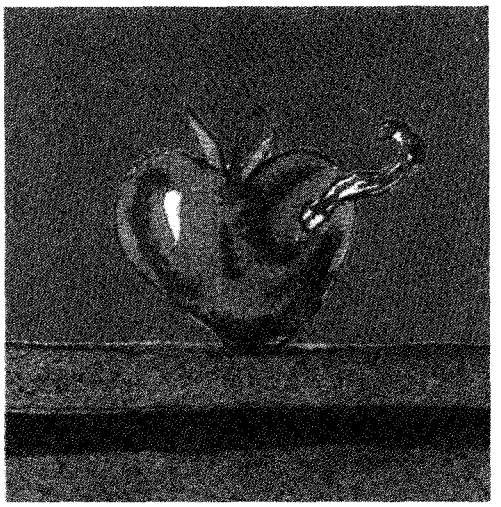
tem of intensive and sustained [assistance] and improvement for local education agencies and schools." The law prescribes a series of actions each state must take to turn around failing schools, from ensuring that the schools have "improvement plans" and "support teams" to, if they continue to under-perform, assigning them to outside managers or even taking the schools over and firing the entire staffs.

These interventions by the state are where the rubber of NCLB will really meet the road. Again, California is ahead of most states in this area. For several years, its department of education has been putting together "turn-around teams" of highly trained veteran teachers, and administrators to go into the state's worst-performing schools and make necessary changes. Last year, these teams intervened in 24 California schools. But here's the rub: This year, according to the results of the NCLB tests, California is supposed to start fixing another 600 schools. Two years from now, that number is expected to grow to 3,600 of California's 9,000 schools, as NCLB's progressively-tougher testing standards push more California schools into the "failing" category.

And oh, by the way, California's new governor Arnold Schwarzenegger isn't increasing the education department's budget.



Like 220 volts of current being forced through a 110-volt kitchen appliance, Bush's school reform law is overloading the capacity of state educational systems—and the smoke is rising.

States rites

State departments of education have never been equipped to do the kind of work that NCLB now demands of them. Since the emergence of full-scale public education systems more than a century ago, the organizing principle of elementary and secondary education has been decentralization, known colloquially as "local control." The U.S. Constitution gave authority over public education to the states, but states delegated most of that authority to local school districts. And the nation's 14,500 districts have sought aggressively to preserve that power.

The federal government began to play a significant role in public education when President Lyndon Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, a Great Society program designed to help needy students. But while piping money into disadvantaged schools, the law did little to make state governments more responsible for academic outcomes. State education departments served mainly as conduits for and accountants of federal funds; it was officials at the district and school level who were responsible for whether there was actually any learning going on in the classrooms. And despite big increases in federal spending for low-income schools, achievement levels there hardly improved.

Attitudes began to change in the mid-1980s after the federal government's "A Nation at Risk" report warned of a "rising tide of mediocrity" in America's schools. In 1989, at a summit meeting in Charlottesville, Va., then-President George H.W. Bush and the nation's governors, led by Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton, broke with the tradition of local control, establishing national education goals. In 1994, then-President Clinton bolstered the nascent national movement for school accountability by signing legislation that mandated that states set achievement standards, measure student performance against them, and reform schools with students that didn't make the grade.

But the 1994 law didn't require states to move quickly to crack down on schools that didn't measure up. That happened only in 2001, with the passage of NCLB. Today, state education agencies, not local school boards, are responsible for reshaping their education systems to produce higher student performance. Overnight, state regulators were to become reformers. "It's a complete shift" in the departments' roles, says Abigail Potts of the Council of Chief State School Officers, a Washington, D.C.-based organization that represents the 50 state departments of education.

But while the expectations and responsibilities of state education bureaucracies have suddenly and utterly changed, their actual structure has not. Consider the California State Department of Education, which occupies a modern, six-story office building on N Street in Sacramento, around the block from the state capitol. With a payroll of 1,452, it's a sizable agency. But it is hardly a leviathan, considering it manages 41 percent of California's core budget and is responsible for overseeing a system that educates one out of seven American school children. Moreover, the vast majority

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of those 1,452 employees spend their days in activities that have little or nothing to do with school reform. One hundred and fifty-five finance experts, for example, share the second floor with 144 special-education regulators; there is a whole division of lawyers, a team to draft safety standards for school buses, and many technologists. Sequestered in a section of the fourth floor are the 100 or so statisticians, experts in school leadership and others—about 7 percent of the department's staff—in charge of the department's most important work under NCLB: identifying and turning around California public schools that are failing to educate their students effectively. And California has a far bigger school reform staff than almost any other state.

In school reform, testing experts are the equivalent of Arabic-speaking U.S. soldiers and spies in Iraq: We simply don't have enough of them, and the lack of such talent is costing us dearly.

Simple arithmetic

Some state education agencies have proven effective at intervening to improve failing schools, at least when the number of such schools has been kept at a manageable level. Two states in particular, Kentucky and North Carolina, produced among the nation's best achievement gains during the 1990s using a strategy similar to NCLB's: comprehensive testing to identify failing schools against clear student achievement standards, followed by state intervention for those that performed the worst. Since 1997, North Carolina's Department of Public Instruction has sent "assistance teams" into 56 of the state's most dysfunctional schools. All but four have been lifted from the bottom category of the state's school performance rankings, and more than half have gone to the top. In Kentucky, schools deemed failing are assigned a school-improvement expert for two years. Over 90 percent of the 356 failing schools that have participated in the turnaround program since its inception a decade ago have met Kentucky's student achievement standards within two years.

The North Carolina and Kentucky programs make clear, however, that turning around failing schools is labor-intensive—and not inexpensive (both states spend about $6 million to turn around a small number of schools, and currently have neither the money nor the staff to do much more). Some accountability advocates suggest that the threat of sanctions or the loss of students alone can be enough incentive to improve school performance. In practice, however, such schools typically still require outside help to do it. For schools in the worst shape, which are often in chaos, with leaders who are weak and ineffective, stronger incentives to do the right thing won't make much difference. Says Ted Stillwell, Iowa's commissioner of education: "You cannot just give them a booklet on how to be better schools."

But NCLB doesn't give states much help in providing this kind of assistance, certainly not on anything like the scale required. As a result, the legislation threatens to overwhelm even those that have made real progress fixing failing schools. Why? Simple arithmetic. Under NCLB, instead of a dozen schools, North Carolina faces the prospect of having to turn around 500—nearly a quarter of all the state's schools, says Elsie Leake, associate superintendent for the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. The situation is the same in Kentucky. "We're set up to handle tens of schools," says Director of Assessment William Insko. "NCLB is requiring us to work with hundreds."

To the moon

There's a reason why NCLB is causing so many more schools to be labeled as failing (some 26,000 schools, or one in four nationwide, failed state standards this year and face sanctions if they do so again next year). It is that the new federal law requires far more detailed demographic analysis of test scores than most state-mandated tests do. Under NCLB, each school's scores must be broken down and reported by gender, race, family income, etc. Students within each group must make progress every year towards a prescribed benchmark. If any one of the groups fails to make its "adequate yearly progress" target for two years in a row

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(and it can be a different sub-group from one year to the next), the whole school is graded a failure. As a result, many schools that once thought they were doing well because, say, their white middle-class students were getting decent test scores, are now being labeled as failures because some subgroup within the school, say Hispanics, isn't doing nearly as well. NCLB was specifically designed this way to make sure schools would not be able to ignore the academic needs of these disadvantaged groups. It is why several civil rights groups supported the law, and why the president can rightly claim that the law's intent is to "leave no child behind."

The ambition of the No Child Left Behind law, then, is right on target. The problem is that states are a long way from having the capacity to carry out the law's mandates. By identifying so many schools as failing—as North Carolina and Kentucky suggest, the numbers are often exponentially more than even the most rigorous state accountability systems turn up—NCLB has also created a pair of perverse incentives for states and schools to act in ways directly counter to the law's intent.

First, by targeting such a large portion of the nation's public schools, NCLB has hyper-charged demand for a very limited supply of people who have the competence required to turn around low-performing schools. But because neither state agencies nor low-income districts which need them the most can afford them, these experts are being employed by wealthier districts, who need them the least. *The Boston Globe* recently reported that NCLB has stirred a bidding war among suburban schools in Massachusetts for superintendents and principals. As those executives' salaries have spiraled upwards, they have been lured away from working-class and urban schools.

The second perverse incentive is caused by the fact that the framers of NCLB did not set national standards for what schools would have to meet each year to avoid the law's sanctions. They left that task to the states. Some states chose to set high standards, while others, in an effort to avoid the impact of the sanctions on large numbers of their schools, lowered their standards, sometimes into the basement. Thus, the way the law works, states with high standards will soon have to deal with huge numbers of failing schools, while states with low standards will have fewer such schools to deal with and thus will appear to be doing a far better job, when in fact the contrary is true.

Learning curve

Can anything be done to keep the No Child Left Behind law from undermining its own goals and creating chaos? The answer, fortunately, is yes.

First, we need a short-term fix. The rules governing the calculation of sanctions on schools not making the grade should be changed so that the states are required to provide assistance only to the schools that need that help the most. States shouldn't drown in an attempt to intervene in a vast number of schools, many of which have missed the present requirements by inches rather than miles. These new rules should be structured in a way that removes perverse incentives to lower standards. States that have set their standards very low in the attempt to avoid sanctions should be required to address the needs of roughly the same proportion of all their schools as states that have maintained high standards.

Second, we need a long-term solution, which can only lie in building the capacity of the states, districts, and schools to reach the kinds of goals contemplated by the framers of NCLB. This is not a simple matter, but a vast, man-to-the-Moon kind of challenge. It means finding people with the data management experience to build and administer the very complex systems called for by the law. It means recruiting experts who can help create truly world class curriculum standards so that teachers will know what they are supposed to teach and students will be able to reach the standards. It means identifying and training thousands of educators who have succeeded in improving their schools to provide on-site assistance at other failing schools, and recruiting still others who can take those schools over if the current staff cannot or will not rise to the challenge. It means creating and expanding networks of talent-laden organizations—universities, think tanks, for-profit and non-profit school companies—that have the skill, experience, and management capacity to turn around individual schools and entire districts. And it means greatly strengthening the capabilities of the agencies that will coordinate this massive effort: state departments of education.

It is almost impossible to exaggerate just how unprepared these departments are for the task, or how vital the federal government's role in preparing them will be. To take just one example, each state will need teams of specially trained statisticians to oversee the development and administration of state tests. This is crucial not just to improve the very low quality of many tests currently in use, but also to avoid the kind of errors that have befallen California and other states in the last six months. Right now, however, the nation's education

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schools produce just 36 graduates with these skills each year. These testing experts are the equivalent of Arabic-speaking U.S. soldiers and spies in Iraq: We simply don't have enough of them, and the lack of such talent is costing us dearly. Washington needs to mount a crash effort to create that talent.

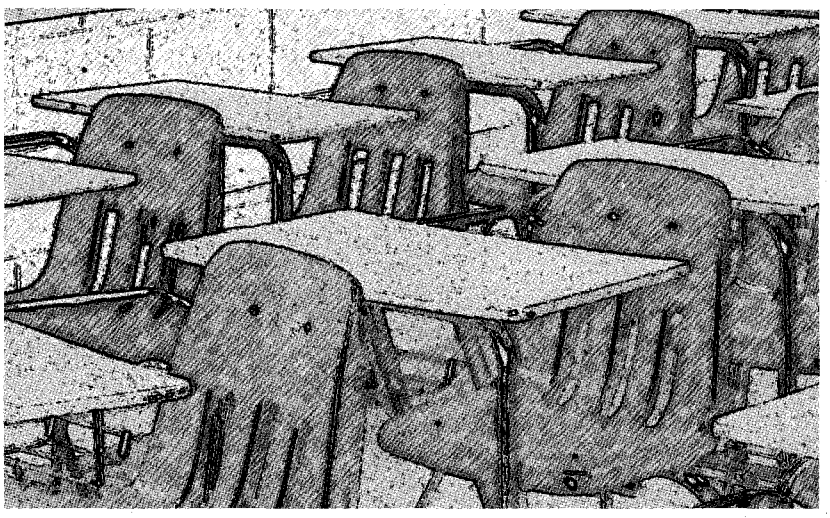
Over the last few months, there has been a loud political back-and-forth in Washington and on the campaign trail about whether NCLB has been sufficiently funded. Democrats have charged that the administration hasn't provided as much money as it promised. Bush administration officials argue that the federal government has increased education spending enough over the past several years to permit states to hire all the additional staff they need to respond to NCLB.

Neither side quite gets it. In the long run, making NCLB work will almost certainly require far more money than the Bush administration, or even many Democrats, have imagined. But currently, notes Rich Cannon, a consultant who tracks NCLB funding, millions of dollars in new money for school reform are being "largely wasted," used "mostly to plug holes in district budgets" rather than to strengthen the capacity of state agencies to assess and turn around failing schools.

Unless something is done soon, the already shaky public support for NCLB will crumble. There are

Trading Spaces

By Richard Whitmire



In late January, President Bush signed a giant spending bill containing one tiny but explosive provision: a five year, $14-million program to provide private-school vouchers to the children of the District of Columbia. With that, Bush launched an aggressive new phase of the decade-long battle over the voucher issue. Previous small experiments in places like Milwaukee and New York have relied on private or state funds. The D.C. program, set to begin in the fall, puts the federal government directly into the voucher-funding game. And while vouchers may be too controversial with swing voters for Bush to openly talk about them in this year's presidential race, the fact that his administration negotiated so hard for the D.C. program suggests that we're likely to see a big push for vouchers in any second Bush term.

Vouchers are one of those subjects for which both sides marshal compelling, if ultimately unsatisfying, arguments. Their opponents argue that to date, studies have not found much evidence that existing voucher programs have yielded improved achievement; that, unlike the public education system, private schools aren't required to test all their students, as public schools now are, and hence aren't accountable for results; and that whatever extra money is available ought to go first to improve existing public schools. Voucher proponents counter that there's no evidence that vouchers do any harm, some indications that they improve minority student performance, and that after 20 years of only slightly successful attempts to reform urban schools, it simply is not fair to keep poor kids waiting around in visibly failing schools for reforms to kick in.

What's needed is a way to cut through this Gordian knot—with a voucher program that provides poor kids with real choice, has a demonstrated record of success and avoids the pitfalls that make liberals skeptical. As it happens, such a program has been underway in Missouri for years.

Beginning in 1983, as the result of a court desegregation order, inner-city St. Louis schoolchildren were allowed to cross city-suburban boundaries to fill empty seats in wealthier suburban school districts, the state paying a fee for each such child to the suburban schools that accept them. This program, called the St. Louis Voluntary Interdistrict Choice Corp., was more politically popular than most similar busing programs around the country, and the state legislature voted to keep it going in 1999, when the desegregation order expired. Since then, the program has been voluntary—neither students nor school districts have to participate if they don't want to—and the state pays public schools $6,081 per student to accept out-of-district kids. Participation by even the best suburban schools is widespread. Schools in Clayton, one of St. Louis' tonier suburbs, accept

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those who would welcome this outcome. Some liberal defenders of the education establishment never liked the accountability movement and are rooting for NCLB to fail. Many conservatives have never accepted the idea that Washington should have any role at all in local schools; others are eager to spin an eventual failure of NCLB as evidence that the public education system is unfixable, and vouchers are the only alternative.

The truth is that failing schools can be turned around, as North Carolina, Kentucky, and several other states have shown. There's no reason to think that these successes can't be greatly expanded upon if the lawmakers in both parties who vigorously supported NCLB become just as energetic in fixing it. They can start by making sure the key actors—the state departments of education that are supposed to lead the whole effort—have the capacity to do so. ◆

Unless something is done soon, the already shaky public support for No Child Left Behind will crumble. There are those on the left and the right who would welcome this outcome.

Research assistance for this article contributed by Washington Monthly intern Nicole Cohen.

500 students from inner-city St. Louis. Nor are the transfers all outward; last year, 556 suburban St. Louis students transferred to attractive magnet programs in the city.

The St. Louis transfer program may qualify as the most studied education experiment in the country. Here are the findings: Although students get off to a slow start in their new schools, by the time they graduate they score significantly higher on achievement tests than do those who stay in urban schools. And here's the clincher: Inter-district students graduate from high school at twice the rate of their counterparts back in the city.

The St. Louis program has been so successful that you might think it would be perfect for D.C. Mayor Anthony Williams and the Bush administration to try in the district. Indeed, voucher proponents who say that poor black parents deserve the choices available to affluent white parents, need only recall that for years some wealthy white D.C. parents have been paying fees to send their kids to better schools across the district line in Montgomery County, Md. Yet the D.C. government and the Bush administration specifically rejected this model city-suburb choice program literally in their own backyard.

Why? Obviously, memories of the busing fiascos of the 1970s might make any politician leery of supporting a program that empowers poor inner-city blacks to attend suburban schools. But a lot has changed in 30 years. Most public schools in the D.C. suburbs are strikingly diverse, with African Americans as well as immigrant kids from many different backgrounds. And as the Missouri example shows, suburban parents don't seem to mind voluntary city-suburb choice programs.

In any event, it was not fear of white backlash that deflected the Bush administration and D.C. officials from the city-suburb option. The real reasons were hardly more edifying. Mayor Williams has been marketing vouchers as a way to revitalize D.C., and shipping kids to the suburbs would undermine such a rationale. Meanwhile, the Bush administration has been using the D.C. experiment to garner support from its conservative base, which sees vouchers as part of a larger agenda of privatizing government; vouchers for suburban public schools don't advance that agenda.

But while a cross-district voucher program might not serve certain narrow political ends, it does meet the biggest problem confronting private school vouchers: the scarcity of classroom seats. In D.C., as in many other cities, affordable parochial schools have a limited number of openings for new students—only 1,300 this year, while good D.C. private schools charge upwards of $20,000 a year in tuition and have long waiting lists. Some entrepreneurs will doubtlessly start private schools to capture the voucher market. But if the city's experiment with charter schools is any indication, such startups are as likely to be shabby fly-by-nights as caring havens. And while bad charter schools can—and sometimes are—shut down by the city, there's no mechanism in the new voucher law to keep dysfunctional private schools from continuing to receive public funds.

D.C.'s existing private schools can probably absorb the small number of students—1,700—who will receive vouchers under the new choice experiment. But voucher proponents aren't shy about wanting to expand the program vastly. The urge is understandable: There are 65,000 students in D.C.'s public schools, a large percentage of whom are stuck in failing schools. The only way to provide most of these children the choice of attending truly better schools anytime soon is through voluntary inter-district choice—the route D.C. and the Bush administration rejected. Harvard professor emeritus Chuck Willie, an advocate of school choice for poor urban students, observes that the D.C. voucher plan "sounds like containment for poor black kids." Willie's right. A program to rescue kids from failing schools should be guided by education policy, not containment policy.

Richard Whitmire writes about education issues for the *USA Today* editorial page.

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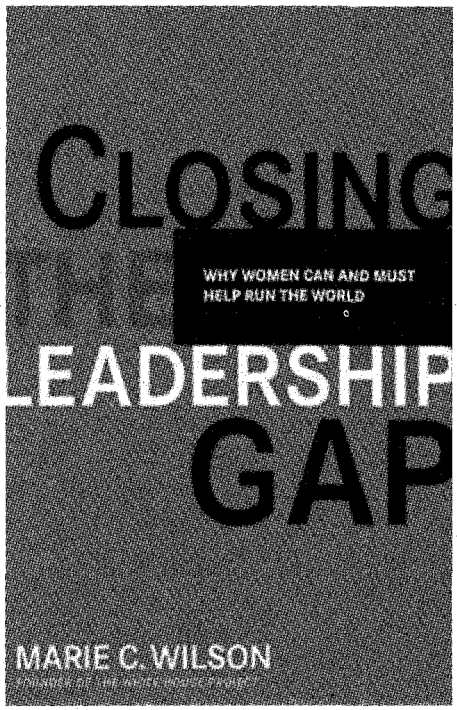
Closing the Leadership Gap:

Why Women Can and Must Help Run the World

Published by Viking Penguin on sale March 8, 2004



An impassioned examination of the vital importance of women in leadership roles—in politics as well as business—by a renowned women's issues advocate

Insightful and inspiring, this book is Can and Must Help Run the World is a call to action for putting women in leadership across all sectors. A leading women's advocate and founder of the White House Project, Marie C. Wilson argues that even though our nation sits on a world spinning with crises, from corporate greed to terrorism to fragile economies, we have barely begun to use our most critical natural resource —women.

Marie Wilson's inspiring message comes from both the heart and the frontlines. What our country needs is simple—more women in charge now. — **Ann Richards**

Courage, Marie Wilson reminds us, is "speaking your mind by telling all your heart." Here Marie does all that and more, as she sets forth a spirited and compelling case for women to claim at last their rightful places of leadership. At stake is not only gender equity but the transformation of society itself. No other book does a better job of pulling together the facts, arguments, observations and words of inspiration from women already on the front lines. Bravo to Marie Wilson! — **David Gergen**

You won't find a stronger set of arguments for making sure more women reach the top. Marie Wilson focuses her passion and her scholarship on the stunning scarcity of American women in leadership positions, even as we move full speed into the 21st century. She provides hard evidence our country will suffer unless we do something about it. — **Judy Woodruff, Anchor, CNN's Inside Politics**

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Hard Currency

Unilateralism doesn't work for foreign aid, either.

By Nancy Birdsall and Brian Deese

Grading on a curve, the east African nation of Tanzania is something of a success story. While still as poor as most of its neighbors, Tanzania has in recent years kept inflation in check, achieved annual growth of over 5 percent, and launched an ambitious plan to reduce poverty and increase investment in its citizens' health and education. Such progress has not been lost on such aid agencies as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), and the World Bank. Beginning in the 1990s, new donors began to flood into Tanzania, while long-time donors branched out into new areas. The capital of Dar-es-Salaam was soon teeming with foreign consultants and aid missions, as the various donors broadened their portfolios to include projects in primary education, clean water, renewable energy, road building, civil-service reform, banking oversight, environmental sustainability, and almost every other area of development.

But this generosity soon became a double-edged sword. Where once Tanzania had hosted a few hundred discrete donor projects, by the mid-1990s it was hosting an estimated 1,500 projects—each with its own expert consultants, procurement deals, auditing arrangements, and reporting requirements—a number that has only increased since. By the end of the decade, the country's Ministry of International Cooperation prepared 2,400 donor reports every quarter and hosted 1,000 meetings a year.

All this new red tape has not come with much new money: Between 1992 and 2002, real growth in foreign aid to Tanzania was almost nil. By 2003, donors' demands on Tanzania's small cadre of competent senior officials were undermining the government's ability to manage its own resources—which, even with large donor inflows, still represented the large majority of total public spending. So the government made a decision. The Tanzanian Ministry of Finance announced (with appropriate diplomatic courtesies) that President Benjamin Mkapa was declaring a four-month long "mission holiday" from April to July of each year, a so-called "quiet time," when foreign aid missions would be asked to stay home.

Enter President Bush, who in March 2002 announced a major new initiative—dubbed the "Millennium Challenge Account" (MCA)—to provide significant assistance to stand-out poor countries that were "ruling justly, investing in people, and encouraging economic freedom," including Tanzania, a likely recipient for the program's first year of funding. (Under Bush's plan, spending will increase to $5 billion a year by 2006.) As if to outdo himself, President Bush last year announced another new aid program: $10 billion over five years to

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combat the AIDS pandemic in Tanzania and 13 other poor countries in Africa and the Caribbean, roughly quadrupling current U.S. funding for AIDS treatment and prevention. These new initiatives reverse a 40-year downward trend in U.S. foreign aid as a percentage of the gross domestic product. But they are more noteworthy for their strong emphasis on targeting resources only to a select number of high-performing countries that can use resources effectively. That's a welcome development in a business best known for such high-profile failures as when billions of dollars were spent by Western donors to prop up Mobutu Sese Seko's regime, or the financing of so-called "white elephant" projects aimed more at doling out lucrative construction contracts than making any real progress in the lives of the world's poor.

Yet the administration's well-intentioned focus on performance and results, while innovative, does nothing to address—and may well aggravate—the problem of project proliferation. As currently conceived, both the MCA and Bush's new AIDS initiative will either reinvent or overlap with efforts already underway at the international level, many of which are effective and, indeed, already supported by the United States. For Tanzania and its peers, that means more layers of bureaucracy with which to cope, more quarterly reports to file, and more visits from more officials.

There's a better way to deliver aid. Focusing on performance and results would seem to require bypassing the crowded field of donors and aid agencies. But in fact, the opposite is true. The duplication, waste, and inefficiencies of the worldwide aid business are largely a consequence of unilateralism—that is, of the unwillingness of many donor countries, including the United States, to coordinate development projects within the countries they aid. To get the most out of its newfound generosity, the Bush administration must adapt to the new world of foreign aid, in which going it alone is not the best way to help the poor.

Paper trial

When the modern practice of assisting poor countries was launched at the end of World War II, the United States was the only game in town, committing 2.5 percent of GDP spread over three years—the equivalent of about $250 billion in today's dollars—under the Marshall Plan to rebuild Western Europe. During the 1960s, at the height of the Cold War, the United States still dominated the foreign aid business, contributing about two-thirds of all such money given in order to win hearts, minds, and basing rights in the developing world. But as a resurgent Japan and Europe, along with oil-rich states, got involved, the United States contracted its commitments, and today accounts for less than one-fifth of global aid spending.

The rest comes from a hodgepodge of more than 50 other bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, from the Swedish International Development Agency to the International Fund for Agriculture Development, none of which contributes more than 15 percent of the total. But where the world's poor are concerned, that pie hasn't gotten much bigger. The Marshall Plan involved a transfer of more than $1,000 in today's dollars for every man, woman, and child in Western Europe in 1948. Tanzania today receives about $33 dollars per person per year from donors, and very large poor countries like Bangladesh get more like $5. Although total real aid budgets have grown in absolute terms, they are lower as a percentage of rich countries' total GDP than they were at their peak 35 years ago, during which time the absolute number of poor people in the world has more than doubled. Thus, the splintering of aid has not brought more help, on average, for the world's poor.

What it has brought is more headaches. Last year, the 50-plus donor nations financed 35,000 different projects in about 150 poor countries, which means 35,000 different sets of reports and evaluations each year. And most donors still employ the practice of "tying" aid; that is, requiring recipients to procure goods and services from the donor country. All U.S. aid officials and consultants, for instance, must fly on U.S. air carriers, regardless of whether they could find a cheaper flight on an international carrier. A number of aid watchdog groups have estimated that tying aid reduces its value by about 15 to 30 percent. In a world where a highly talented Indian or Brazilian civil engineer could be hired at one-tenth the cost of a Dutch one, this may be a conservative estimate.

Splintering and tying would not be so pernicious if most projects were well-targeted to areas where the recipient country has both a need for funding and a capacity to use it effectively. Yet too often, they reflect donors' preferences or bad habits more than the logic of recipients' needs.

One problem is that donors' interests often overlap or even conflict. In Haiti, for example, the Europeans and the United States both fund infant and child health programs, which are politically popular at home. If the different agencies had worked out an efficient division of labor for early-childhood health care, this overlap might not be a problem. But as a 1998 USAID report explained (in typical donor-speak), "the respective programs do not articulate well together to enhance the general impact of investments in health or to avoid duplication."

Moreover, all bilateral and even multilateral agencies are under constant pressure to demonstrate results and successes that resonate with their legislatures or other contributors who control the purse strings. And while agencies should be accountable for how they spend their money, that pressure often expresses itself in a preference for funding "new" projects over recurring expenses for old ones. New projects, particularly those which involve building something, are a visible sign of

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success for donors. But when you build new highways in countries that lack the equipment, training, or administrative capacity to maintain them, soon enough the highways become useless to the people they are intended to help. Likewise, one of the most pressing health problems in Sub-Saharan African countries is chronic absenteeism from health clinics—facilities built by well-meaning donors who neglected the less visible but more intractable problem of doctors and nurses who, working at low pay and without the necessary supplies and equipment, often have little incentive to show up for work.

The duplication, waste, and inefficiencies of the worldwide aid business are largely a consequence of unilateralism—that is, of the unwillingness of many donor countries, including the United States, to coordinate development projects within the countries they aid.

In addition, when every donor insists on funding construction projects—to be completed only by that nation's construction companies under "tying" rules—the aid business suffers massive inefficiencies. In Guinea today, new primary school facilities cost anywhere from $130 to $878 per square meter, depending on which donor country is in charge. (If the countries that build schools at the high end of that cost curve paid their more efficient peers to do the job instead, they'd have an extra $748 per square meter of classroom to devote to Guinea's pressing need for teachers and textbooks.) A similar problem extends across Sub-Saharan Africa, where most public investment in infrastructure is externally financed. Research suggests that in much of Africa, the return to the marginal dollar spent on public infrastructure investment is much lower than in other developing regions.

More broadly, as donor aid splinters, it scatters the time and attention of officials who ought to be focusing on broader or more persistent problems of governance. The finance minister of a poor nation may end up scrambling to manage a portfolio of thousands of disparate, unconnected donor projects, rather than, say, thinking about ways to crack down on corruption or developing a comprehensive plan for tax reform. (Funding for such efforts has declined from 17 percent of all aid during the mid-1970s to 8 percent in 1995-1999.) As Gerald Sendaula, Uganda's minister of finance, recently explained, aid from donors can be "very expensive."

What Bush could learn from Bono—and the Pope

But there are approaches to delivering aid that make more efficient use of scarce donor dollars. Take the question of "debt relief." Many poor countries devote enormous chunks of their budgets to paying down old loans to official donor creditors, including the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. For some countries, much of it constitutes so-called "odious debt" incurred by corrupt dictators or other government officials who siphoned the money off for personal gain. For others, even "good" loans made during periods of political or economic instability may not have produced the hoped-for results. Billions of these countries' dollars are thus tied up in debt repayments. But for those that have instituted economic reforms and are reducing corruption, those dollars could now be fruitfully invested in education, infrastructure, civil service, and other reforms that would make them more prosperous and eventually less dependent on future aid. That's why programs to relieve such debt command support across the political spectrum, from rock star Bono to the Pope to former North Carolina Sen. Jesse Helms.

During the mid-1990s, facing a Republican-led Congress highly skeptical of aid programs, the Clinton administration turned its attention to supporting an innovative international approach to debt relief. Putting $800 million on the table, the United States worked closely with the World Bank and other donors to broker an unprecedented arrangement under which 24 bilateral donors and 21 multilateral institutions agreed on a single process for relieving poor-country debt. The United States used its influence to push for more discipline in awarding relief only to those poor countries with a prior track record of good policy. The U.S. also supported a more streamlined, but still comprehensive, approach advocated by the World Bank for the poor countries themselves. Under the debt relief initiative, debtor governments that have met the eligibility requirement develop a coordinated national plan, known as a Poverty Reduction Strategy, for how they will use newly available resources to fund domestic efforts in education, health, and other areas. Once a plan is submitted and approved, all donors committed to supporting financially the debt write-down. In short, rather than negotiating write-downs on thousands of different debt contracts held by dozens of different countries, poor countries who meet the standards enjoy one-stop shopping.

Despite the slow and sometimes agonizing process of bringing the nearly four dozen donors together and pushing debtor countries to prepare Poverty Reduction Strategies, this initiative has delivered results. Twenty-seven of the 42 eligible debtor countries are now receiving relief, and the World Bank estimates that social spending among that group increased by an average of 45 percent between 1999 and 2003. The debt- relief

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strategy not only provided those governments with more money to spend, but also forced each one to think carefully about how to spend it, coordinating the efforts not only of various ministries, but of local NGOs and private donors, too. Debt relief in Mozambique has enabled the government to immunize a half million children against tetanus, diphtheria, and whooping cough; allowed Honduras to offer three more years of free schooling to sixth graders; and helped Uganda hire more teachers and buy more textbooks even as the elimination of school fees led to a doubling of enrollment.

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The example of debt relief demonstrates two important virtues of a multilateral approach to aid. First, because U.S. aid dollars have strong signaling power, involving many other donors allows us to leverage our own relatively modest contributions many times over. The act of putting $800 million on the table—besides spending some political capital on the international stage—was an important factor in convincing dozens of other donors that the debt relief initiative was serious, significant, and deserving of their new aid dollars as well. Our initial investment seeded an initiative that has already forgiven about $5 billion in debt payments, and is set to forgive more than $40 billion over the next two decades.

Second, the United States was able to use debt relief to ensure that its focus on disciplined lending would permeate the entire aid business. Discipline about county eligibility made it easier for donors to support those countries' own strategies as a template for assistance, instead of persisting in their own multiple, uncoordinated efforts. That approach has since been adopted by several other bilateral and multilateral donors, from Scandinavian donor agencies to the World Bank. And it has inspired multilateral aid efforts in other areas, too, from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria, which pools funds from 45 countries and 13 corporations and private donors, to the Education for All "Fast Track Initiative" for basic education, which invites selected developing countries to submit national education plans to a consortium of donors who fund them collectively.

Come together

The multilateral debt-relief effort became a model for Bush's MCA, which focuses on identifying and supporting those poor countries that have already demonstrated an ability to use foreign assistance effectively. And the criteria used to pick these high-performers—a set of 16 relatively non-controversial indicators of development progress—may well become the new standard for determining where to give the bulk of our aid budget. But unlike debt relief, Bush's new effort appears to reflect the traditional disdain of former private-sector CEOs for coordinating public-sector efforts, even those within the U.S. government. The MCA, for example, is creating a new public corporation, completely independent of our traditional aid agency, USAID, to disburse as much as $1 billion in 2004 to high-performing poor countries. To date, the administration has been reluctant to hold meaningful consultations with other donors—whether our allies in Europe and Japan, or the management of the World Bank and other institutions of which the United States is a member. The administration's initial gesture at multilateralism—announcing the project during a press conference at Washington, D.C.'s Inter-American Development Bank, with Bush flanked by World Bank President Jim Wolfensohn and Bono—has, after two years, yet to be built upon.

Likewise, while many people have noted that Bush's new budget includes far less money for AIDS than the $2.4 billion promised during last year's State of the Union, fewer have noticed that the bulk of what remains will be spent unilaterally. A portion of the funding will go into the Global Fund, which allows poor countries and private aid organizations to appeal to several dozen donors with a single proposal—reviewed by an independent technical panel—rather than preparing separate proposals for each one. But most of the new aid will be spent on a new U.S. program to fight AIDS in 14 chosen countries, adding another layer of bureaucracy and paperwork to the worldwide fight against AIDS. Why not put all the money into the Global Fund, then push fellow donors to ante up while insisting on the kind of accountability provisions contained in the MCA? The Bush administration is right to demand hard-headed, businesslike approaches to finding the most effective solutions to bring positive change in the lives of the poor. But it needs to think hard about whether unilateral aid is really the most effective way to produce results.

With the military effort in Iraq slowly shifting from invasion to reconstruction, the administration has begun to reach out to other donors through the United Nations to leverage the financial, diplomatic, and logistical benefits of having a coordinated effort. There's a lesson here for the U.S. foreign aid program, too. Finding more coordinated approaches on AIDS or MCA initiatives would not compromise any of the broader goals President Bush has established. It will take serious work, and a willingness to play nice with others. But engaging with our allies seems a small price to pay to transform the business of aid. ◆

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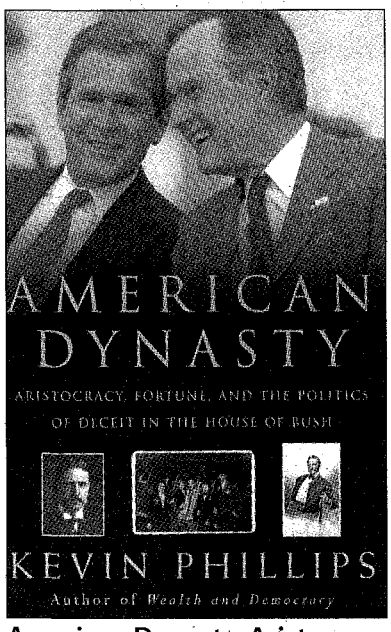
Daddy, War, Bucks

Kevin Phillips revisits the sins of the Bush fathers.

By Jeff Greenfield

When Kevin Phillips appears on television, he is usually identified as a "Republican strategist," a label about as useful as identifying Robert Novak as a "registered Democrat." Yes, Phillips first gained attention in 1969 when he authored *The Emerging Republican Majority*, a shrewdly prescient look at how traditional Democrats were migrating toward the GOP on a path shaped by patriotism, cultural values, and race. In the decades since, however, Phillips has moved so far away from his Republican roots—or as he might argue, the Republican Party has moved so far away from the values of genuinely free markets, meritocracy, and individual liberties—that he is clearly more comfortable on the port side of the ship of state.

His last book, *Wealth and Democracy*, was a modulated but unmistakable work of anger at what he saw as the accumulation of enormous unearned wealth at the top of an ever-narrowing pyramid that has left the average American facing economic vulnerability and political impotence. With *American Dynasty*, Phillips has put modulation aside; this is nothing less than an indictment of four generations of the Bush family, composed at a barely contained white heat. In Phillips's eyes, the Bushes represent the embodiment of a mortal danger to the American republic: "the advent of a Machiavelli-inclined dynasty ... [with] a dynastic heir whose unfortunate inheritance is privileged, covert, and globally embroiling."



American Dynasty: Aristocracy, Fortune, and the Politics of Deceit in the House of Bush
By Kevin Phillips
Viking Press, $25.95

That conclusion follows 330 pages of an argument that reaches back to the financial beginnings of Samuel P. Bush and George Herbert Walker, both of whom launched the Bushes on a path of huge financial gain, war profiteering, international entanglements, and—generation by generation—crony capitalism and political finagling. It is both the great strength and great weakness of the book that Phillips piles on so much detail that a dispassionate reader does not know whether to be dazzled by the argument or paralyzed by it. Here is George Herbert Walker at the helm of a great investment house headed by Averell Harriman; here is Prescott Bush, father and grandfather of presidents, weaving a web of power that reaches back to his Skull and Bones days—that Yale secret society plays a recurring role here—and forward to suspicious financial dealings with Nazi Germany and (possibly) work as an intelligence agent. Here is George Herbert Walker Bush, riding family connections to unearned business success and (possibly) covert intelligence work years before his ascension to the directorship of the CIA. Here is George W. Bush, leveraging the increasing power of the Sunbelt religious right into the presidency itself: what Phillips labels "the first American restoration." It is for Phillips the latest—not the final, just the latest—chapter in a "pattern of deception, dissimulation, and disinformation."

Phillips's—portrait in many shades of black—encompasses so much detail that it calls to mind a Bosch triptych of Hell, with Bush demons cavorting on every inch of the canvas. From the overthrow of the Iranian government in 1953, to the Bay of Pigs, to air and water pollution in Texas, to the Enron scandals, to the Florida fiasco of 2000, Phillips finds the not-so-fine hand of the Bush family and what it represents: "the apotheosis of that unwarranted influence ... by the military-industrial complex" that President Eisenhower warned against in his 1961 farewell address. Bush-o-phobes will find virtually every one of their fondest (worst)

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Hieronymus Bosch

The portrait Kevin Phillips paints of the Bush family—a portrait in many shades of black—encompasses so much detail that it calls to mind a Bosch triptych of Hell, with Bush demons cavorting on every inch of the canvas.

assumptions here. Did the Reagan-Bush campaign conspire with the Iranian government to keep American hostages captive until after the 1980 election? While not embracing the more colorful allegations (Bush flying off to Paris in a supersonic jet), he clearly believes that the campaign did indeed deal with agents of the Iranian government. Did George W. Bush in effect steal the presidency in Florida? Yes, Phillips argues, aided by a weak-kneed Gore campaign. Moreover, he says, "In addition to securing the presidency, they kept any debate from focusing issues of restoration, legitimacy, and a thwarted popular plurality," a discussion silenced by the events of September 11.

As with *Wealth and Democracy*, Phillips's reach is remarkably ambitious. When he talks of "restoration" he reaches back centuries, to the Bourbons and the Stuarts. His analysis includes everything from the details of the Bush's immersion in Texas oil to the appeal of ABC's "Dynasty" and the popularity in America of "Burke's Peerage." He frames the public lives of G.H.W. and G.W. Bush in the context of Texas, by which he means everything from its increasingly polluted air to the increasing power of fundamentalism; and when he speaks of the latter, he reaches to examples of fundamentalism in Israel and the Islamic world as well.

Yet after this dizzying ride, what are we left with? We learn more than we can possibly absorb about the interlocking worlds of high finance, covert intelligence work, secret societies, and global interventionism. But we are also offered, time after time, not proof of Phillips's most serious charges, but surmise. Consider this notion about the "October surprise" allegations that the Reagan campaign conspired Iran to keep hostages captive until after the elections. No, he says, Bush almost surely did not jet off to Paris, but the idea of Bush "reviewing plans over dinner with [Reagan Campaign Manager Bill] Casey at Washington's elite Alfalfa Club—the two did in fact meet and dine right after Casey came back from Europe in midsummer 1980—has a great ring of plausibility." Well, yes, a Washington dinner is more "plausible" than a surreptitious trip on a supersonic plane, but it does not establish much when the charge is as explosive as this one. Similar "plausibility" arguments undergird everything from George H.W. Bush's possible work as a CIA agent to George W. Bush's suspected cocaine arrest. These morsels will feed the appetites of Bush's political adversaries, but too often the proper judgment is the Scotch verdict: "not proven." Further, it seems at times that Phillips is coming perilously close to a "Bad Seed" argument; that entitlement, arrogance, and anti-democratic impulses, are somehow encoded in the Bush DNA.

For all of such overreaching, though, *American Dynasty* is still a book of substantial power. As in *Wealth and Democracy*, Phillips is not content to be confined within the consensus boundaries of American public-policy debate. He is after bigger game: in this case, the extent to which the republican objectives of the Constitution's framers are threatened by the structure of economic and political power now in place. Whether Phillips is right to use the Bush family as its embodiment, the reality of that power is undeniable—as is the unsettling fact that its existence is all but ignored in our frenetic political discourse. No one is more willing—and able—to dissect that power than Kevin Phillips.

Jeff Greenfield is CNN senior analyst and author, most recently, of *Oh Waiter, One Order of Crow.*

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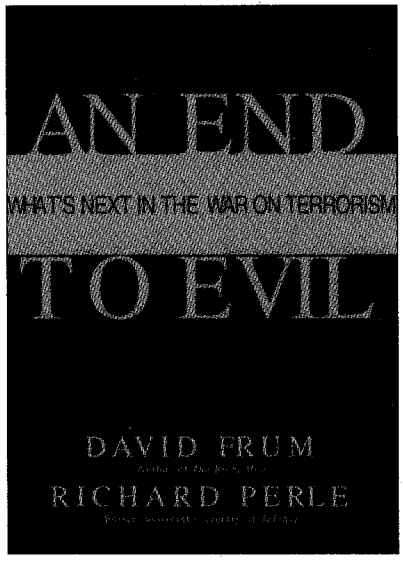
Twilight of the Neocons

Richard Perle has begun to panic.

By Stefan Halper and Jonathan Clarke

Since 9/11 a cascade of books purveying instant analysis on the ramifications has hit the bookstores. A deep fault line runs between them. Those with "evil" or "jihad" in the title lie on one side of the divide; those with "empire" or "lies" are found on the other. Their mutually antagonistic readerships snarl at each other across the chasm. So it is with David Frum and Richard Perle's new book *An End to Evil: What's Next in the War on Terrorism*, in which they reinforce the thesis—now usually described as neoconservative—that American interests and values are best pursued with a maximum of military stick and minimum of negotiating carrot. It makes little difference whether the issue is Libya, Iran, or North Korea. The authors believe market-democracy is best delivered on the back of a Tomahawk missile.

The book's argument is easy to follow, consisting of three main propositions: America is an immense force for good in the world (who would disagree?); American military might is preeminent (again, universal agreement); therefore, the way to project American values is through American force of arms. Ah, there's the rub. And



An End to Evil: What's Next in the War on Terrorism
By David Frum and Richard Perle
Random House, $25.95

underlying these propositions is the authors' absolute certitude about the correctness of their solutions and the unreliability of what are darkly called the "accommodationists in the foreign-policy establishment."

Ideology informs the book like an iron spine. The authors seem less interested in imparting new information than in reminding the faithful about what they should be thinking. This may be the book's most interesting aspect, in as much as the authors betray a mild note of panic. They write that "the will to win is ebbing in Washington" and warn against "a reversion to the bad old habits of complacency and denial." It is as though they fear that, given the so-far fragile progress in both Afghanistan and Iraq and in their misconceived recommendations for North Korea, their 15 minutes of fame may be coming to an end. They are right to worry. The twilight of neoconservatism has arrived.

Tally the faithful

This book is essentially an attempt to plug leaks in what the authors feel may be a sinking ship. As such it has the shrill tone of a political manifesto. In the case of Frum, a former White House speechwriter who is more a political jingle-writer with an ear for a polemical catch phrase than a foreign-policy expert, the book's bludgeoning tone is unsurprising. Perle, however, a member of the administration's Defense Policy Board, has a record of real accomplishment in international affairs, having played a widely praised role in arms control negotiations under Ronald Reagan. He might have brought his experience to bear on the vexing dilemmas of a post-9/11 world—for instance, how to push democratic reform on resistant tyrants whose cooperation we need to apprehend terrorists. Instead he has chosen to put his name to a work that overlooks the existence of such quandaries, that oversimplifies the craft of international relations, and that betrays a worrying indifference to how the real world works.

The authors keep things simple, focusing on potential waverers from the cause and reminding readers of the sources of their discontent in the form of the familiar demons: President George H.W. Bush's blunder at the end of Desert Storm; Clinton's fecklessness; the State Department's relationship-mongering; the CIA's liberal political correctness; Chirac's duplicity; the futility of the United Nations; the

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BBC's defamations; and the bad faith, defeatism, or worse of anyone who disagrees. Some weasel wording aside, the book comes perilously close to embracing a religious war against Islam. These targets surely have charges to answer, but one wishes that the criticisms were less routine and more historically accurate. The first President Bush, for example, whose exquisite management of the Cold War endgame is one of the all-time gems of American statesmanship, may be surprised by the book's accusation that he favored keeping the Soviet Union intact—and the CIA's Bill Casey (the scourge of the Sandinistas) would certainly chuckle at being called liberal.

The real world makes only cameo appearances in the book. Readers are not asked to clutter their minds with the actual outcomes in Iraq and Afghanistan—the continuing American casualties, the burgeoning heroin production or unsavory deals with despots in Central Asia. No. Electricity is back. Schools are reopening. Mission accomplished. Time to move on. Problems with Syria, Iran, North Korea, China? It's simple. Straight talk and a whiff of grapeshot. Terrorism? More of the same. The authors speak only of force. It is the only dimension, they say, through which the terrorist challenge can be approached. And, by implication, it is the only thing that the authors trust their readers to understand.

Perle and Frum set a low value on regional expertise (language skills, knowledge of foreign cultures and mores, foreign contacts, etc.) and propose a vast expansion of political appointments in the foreign affairs agencies. Every administration struggles with inevitable tensions between ideology at the center and expertise in the field. But the degree to which the authors embrace ideology as the core of the policy process sometimes leaves the impression that they spend little time actually following international developments, let alone analyzing them. In the short section on the Middle East peace process—this appears between obligatory quotation marks to signal the authors' disapproval of non-force-based tactics—there is no mention of the burgeoning initiatives on both the political left and right in Israel and within the military to come up with new thinking. Through clenched teeth, Perle and Frum concede their acceptance of what they call a Palestinian "mini-state." But they are silent on what happens if the Palestinians decide to reject this prospect and instead allow their birthrate to become the main pressure point upon Israel. Once again, the authors seem concerned that if they make any concessions to negotiation-based efforts, they will strengthen the hands of those seeking negotiated outcomes with Iran, Syria, or North Korea.

There is a growing sense within the GOP that the neoconservative agenda may have created problems whose solutions are elusive—or worse. As guardians of the flame, Perle and Frum see their book as a preemptive strike against potential backsliders in their own ranks.

The few new ideas offered in this book rush by so quickly as to make it impossible to judge their merits. On North Korea, for example, once the authors have got out of their system the absurd (outside certain Strangeloveesque circles) option of a first strike on Yongbyon even at the cost of the certain destruction of Seoul (it's the South Koreans' fault, the authors argue, for not protecting themselves adequately), they propose an option short of war that may be worth considering: an air and naval blockade. This would have been the place to mention the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI)—a multilateral agreement crafted by the State Department with many of the United States' principal allies—which, aggressively interpreted, might usefully ratchet up multilateral pressure on North Korea. Perhaps the multilateral dimensions were too much for the authors to stomach. Similarly, with their suggestion of dismembering Saudi Arabia if it does not close down the Wahhabi madrasas. Is this a serious idea, with all the implications (the impact on Iraq and Jordan, the empowerment of Iran, the energy aspects etc.) thought through? Or is it just a bit of agitprop that bubbled up at an AEI "black coffee" teach-in? We are not given enough information to judge.

Underinformation and fear of real, fact-based debate are the lasting impressions that the book leaves. When the authors speak about a "war of ideas," they do not have in mind a search for common ground or an attempt to persuade, but total capitulation. As such, this book is one for true believers. If you loathe Clinton, despise the CIA, scorn the State Department, hate the French, or just generally feel contempt for most foreigners, and if you have nothing better to do on the Metroliner to New York, this book will deliver you at Penn Station if not wiser, at least with your anger fortified.

Which reinforces the thesis that the real purpose of the book is to ward off a policy shift by the administration. The dustcover claims that it "will define the conservative point of view on foreign policy for a new generation." The suspicion lingers, however, that the authors know full well that it will do nothing of the kind. As Ronald Reagan's worldview evolved, he, too, moved away from the neoconservatives whom he had accommodated in his first administration. The

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authors discern something similar in train with Bush. They detect "fatigue" in Washington and sense, probably correctly, that the fatigue is with their brand of zany, one-size-fits-all belligerence.

Dissent is indeed breaking out inside the neoconservative tent. One of their colleagues, Robert Kagan, recently wrote in *The New York Times* that the net result of U.S. policy since 9/11 has been that "America, for the first time since World War II, is suffering a crisis of international legitimacy. Americans will find that they cannot ignore this problem." This is a significant departure from neoconservative triumphalist orthodoxy. Circumstances have also prompted the Bush administration to take actions that are hard to square with neoconservative rectitude: turning to the United Nations to help cope with the Shi'ite demand for elections in Iraq; seeing the Joint Chiefs admit that U.S. forces are dangerously overstretched; relying on China to be our intermediary in negotiations with North Korea.

Allies of Perle and Frum still occupy powerful positions in the Bush administration, and the ideas and worldview expressed in their book remain influential there. Still, there is a growing sense within the GOP in Washington that the neoconservative agenda may have created problems whose solutions are elusive—or worse. As guardians of the flame, the authors see their book as a preemptive strike against potential backsliders in their own ranks, an effort—a sort of sting in the dying scorpion's tail—to rally the troops against the looming reassertion of mainstream, rational conservatism.

Stefan Halper, a senior fellow at The Centre of International Studies at Cambridge University, served in the Nixon, Ford, and Reagan administrations, and **Jonathan Clarke,** a foreign-affairs scholar at the CATO Institute, are co-authors of *America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and Global Order* to be published by Cambridge University Press in the summer of 2004.

Hollywood and Squares

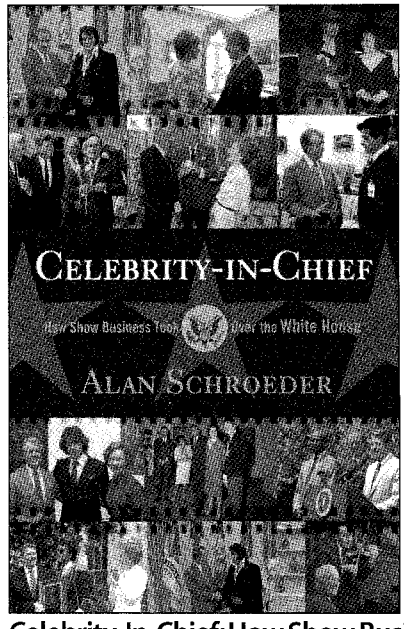
Celebrities and presidents don't mix.

By Jamie Malanowski

The best way to enjoy Alan Schroeder's *Celebrity-in-Chief: How Show Business Took Over the White House* is to read it the same way one might tackle a can of Planter's Mixed Nuts: rummage around to grab the cashews and leave the filberts alone. Schroeder has obviously toiled to mine whole libraries of celebrity biography and autobiography for accounts of what may well be every single presidential-celebrity interface since Lincoln met Booth and offers us an exhaustive collection of anecdotes ranging from the hilarious to the downright weird.

What's unfortunate is what Schroeder has done with this material. A glibber and breezier writer could probably have gathered these stories into a fun magazine feature. Instead Schroeder has political scientized them in a dull tome, racking up such categories as How Entertainers are Good for Presidents, How Entertainers Are Bad for Presidents, How Presidents Are Bad for Entertainers, Presidents As Entertainers, and Presidents as Entertainment, which if only for symmetry's sake, should have been called Entertainers As Presidents.

These are not altogether useless categories, but they are awfully fungible. Take, for example, the chapter on How Entertainers are Bad for Presidents. It's hard to accept that an antiwar outburst by a substitute member of the Ray Coniff Singers at a White House dinner could actually have hurt Richard Nixon. It's even harder to believe that Bill Clinton's swipe at Sister Souljah—which broke the alleged rule that presidents shouldn't criticize entertainers!—could really be damaging, or that the anecdote wouldn't be more at home in a chapter on, say, How Presidents Can Manipulate Minor Personages Into Useful Props.



Celebrity-In-Chief: How Show Business Took Over the White House
By Alan Schroeder
Westview Press, $26.00

Okay, okay, I'm quibbling—the book had to be organized somehow. A larger problem is the filberts. Separating the sweetest, saltiest stories are pages and pages devoted to recounting every-

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Getty Images

When the Gipper and the Gloved One got together, everyone looked silly.

one who performed at every inaugural ball, fundraiser, and state dinner of the last half century. And while it's a little interesting to note that Woody Allen campaigned and performed for, of all people, Lyndon Johnson, and while it's a little fun to learn that Mitzi Gaynor played the White House (if only to be reminded that once there was actually a person named Mitzi Gaynor high-stepping across our television screens), and while it's a little puzzling to consider how much President and Mrs. Ford must have really dug the music of Tony Orlando and Dawn, the reaction these facts registered on my personal "Huh!?" scale could have been accomplished with an economical two-page chart.

So much for the filberts. Let's talk about Schroeder's cashews. He's got a bunch, though he rarely distills much flavor from them: At a state dinner for Queen Elizabeth II, the Captain and Tennille sang "Muskrat Love," a song about copulating rodents. When Elvis Presley endorsed Adlai Stevenson, he said, "I don't dig the intellectual bit, but I'm telling you, man, he knows the most." John Wayne once contributed $1,000 to Dwight Eisenhower, but warned Jack Warner not to ask for more, explaining, "I find that I have to make about $15,000 in order to pay agents, taxes, and alimony for my first wife—this does not include my second—in order to make this $1,000. I really can't afford this." After sending President Carter a letter calling to deport Iranian protesters, Bob Hope got miffed when he received only a form letter in response. Richard Nixon began a memo complaining about the jokes at a White House Correspondents Dinner with the hilarious statement, "I'm not a bit thin-skinned." Nancy Reagan, having advised Frank Sinatra to dump his wife, Barbara Marx, Barbara later forbade Nancy to attend Frank's funeral—but Nancy went anyway. Gene Kelly allayed the fears of concerned parents Ron and Nancy Reagan by reassuring them that "not all ballet dancers are homosexual." JFK concluded a quickie with Marlene Dietrich by asking, "Did you ever make it with my father?" to which Marlene said no, and Jack replied, "Well, that's one place I'm in first." Jackie?

One promising subject that Schroeder does raise, but never plumbs, is the celebrity gap: For many years, Democrats have enjoyed the support of more and bigger stars, and it's hard to say why exactly. It's easy to understand, for example, that Barbra Streisand is a Democrat; a lot of Jews from Brooklyn are. But Robert Redford, for example, was a WASPy kid from Santa Monica; people from that background could gravitate to either party. Is there something about being in show business that attracts stars to liberal causes? Of course, some entertainers have taken conservative positions—old timers like John Wayne and Jimmy Stewart, and more recent stars like Clint Eastwood, Bruce Willis, and Arnold Schwarzenegger—but have other would-be conservative performers felt inhibited because of the dominance of Hollywood liberals? Today there seem to be more conservative stars than ever. Does that mean Hollywood has become more tolerant of political diversity, or is Beverly Hills now as polarized as the rest of the country?

Perhaps it's best not to give such loyalties too much weight. Schroeder's book is full of presidential-celebrity interactions, but in most of them (especially those involving Ronald Reagan), both the politicians and the stars seem vain and silly. Occasionally, there's a genuine exchange, as when Dick Nixon threw a surprisingly hip party for Duke Ellington, and 15 jazz masters played at the White House deep into the night; or when Sarah Vaughn cried after singing for LBJ, realizing how far she as a singer and a woman of her race had come in her adult life. But more often, we are offered Warren Beatty and Barbra Streisand overreacting, Bill Clinton and George Bush gushing, or Marty Allen frugging with Betty Ford, under the eyes of Bob Hope and Tony Orlando. Somehow, when presidents and celebrities get together, the proximity diminishes them both.

Jamie Malanowski is a New York writer.

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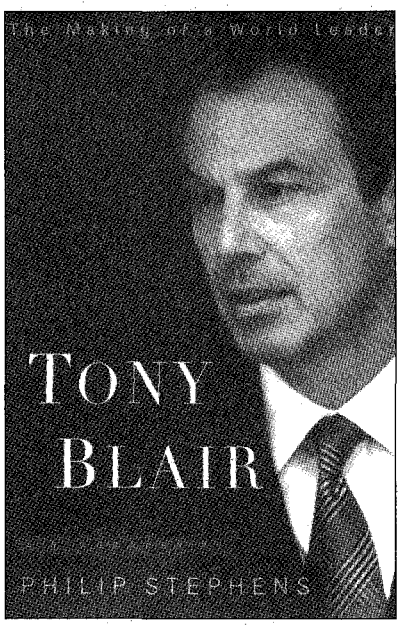
Blair Hitch Project

How Clinton's ideological fellow traveler became Bush's closest ally.

By Kenneth S. Baer

"Be his friend. Be his best friend. Be the guy he turns to." That was the advice Bill Clinton gave his close ally and ideological fellow traveler, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, weeks before Clinton was to hand over the reins of power to George W. Bush.

In the annals of diplomacy, it's not the most sophisticated theory of great-power politics, but it proved to be effective. In their first joint news conference in February 2001, when asked if the two leaders had anything in common, Bush responded that they both used Colgate toothpaste. Many—including those in Blair's inner circle—thought that dentifrice was the beginning and end of the discussion. After all, Blair was not only Clinton's buddy and contemporary, at ease among the cosmopolitan elites of Britain and the United States; he was the co-architect of the "Third Way" progressive response to the conservatism that Bush held dear. More than that, as National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice explained to a British official early in his term, "You should really know, the President doesn't feel comfortable with Europeans. He much prefers Latin Americans."



Tony Blair: The Making of a World Leader
By Philip Stephens
Viking Press, $25.95

Despite his lack of Hispanic heritage, Blair and the new president did become friends, and their bond deepened after the attacks of September 11. Bush had no stronger ally in the buildup to and invasion of Iraq than Blair. He withstood defections from his party's backbenches, protests in the streets of London, and growing alienation from his allies in Western Europe to back the United States. In the run-up to the war, Vice President Cheney, in the words of one Blair aide, "waged a guerrilla war" against the British prime minister's desire to pass another U.N. resolution before the invasion. The Pentagon locked Britain out of post-war planning for Iraq, and it seemed that every time that Bush got in trouble—such as when questions arose surrounding his claim that Iraq tried to acquire nuclear material from Niger—he blamed the British. Yet through it all, Blair never wavered in his support for Bush's plans.

How and why Bill Clinton's best friend became Bush's is part of the fascinating and important story Philip Stephens tells in his new biography, *Tony Blair: Making of a World Leader*. Stephens, a long-time Blair watcher and senior editor at the *Financial Times*, provides in this lively, intelligent, and accessible book valuable insight into Blair's background and political ideology. He deftly traces the arc of Blair's commitment to "community" from his spiritual awakening at Oxford to his domestic and foreign policy as prime minister. At home, his conviction meant rejecting the right-wing belief that all one needs to succeed is for government to get out of the way, and rejecting the left-wing view that all one needs is more centralized government. Abroad, this belief fostered Blair's keen appreciation of the interdependency of nations in the era of globalization and in the importance of countries working together to enforce global norms, using force where necessary.

Contrary, then, to what many of his critics charge, Blair, Stephens argues, while definitely a political animal, is not guided solely by tactical positioning. Indeed, fidelity to his philosophy is what made Blair natural allies alike with New Democratic reformer Clinton and with Republican crusader Bush.

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Prime Minister's questions

Unlike many in his party's leadership, Tony Blair was not born into the family of Labour, but chose it. The son of a barrister, who himself harbored dreams of becoming a Tory MP, Blair grew up resolutely middle class in the northeastern city of Durham. He attended the elite Fettes College boarding school in Edinburgh and continued his studies at Oxford where he avoided student politics; but, as Stephens explains, those years in the city of dreaming spires were critical in shaping Blair's political outlook. As an undergraduate, Blair underwent a religious awakening and was introduced to the work of the early 20th-century Scottish theologian John Macmurray.

Macmurray's central insight was that societies are not defined by the individuals within them, but rather communities are critical in shaping the lives of individuals. First through the family, and then through other wider networks in civil society, strong communities create mutually supportive environments in which individuals can realize their full potential. Transplanted into the political realm, this view compels one to reject both the libertarianism of the new right as well as the statism of the old left. To Blair, as he explained to Stephens in an interview last summer, Macmurray offered a philosophy of "how you retain the sense of solidarity without becoming the collectivization of society. And so that concept at the time struck me as the right concept politically, as well as theologically." That idea has stuck with him for his entire career.

In 1983, Blair—now married to another London barrister, Cherie Booth—was elected to Parliament at the high-water mark of Margaret Thatcher's dominance. It seemed to many that he had merely won a berth on the Titanic of British politics. But as with the Republican Party after Watergate or the Democrats after Mike Dukakis, this actually opened a window of opportunity, since Labour had no choice but to seek new ideas and leadership. Seizing the opening, Blair worked with his officemate Gordon Brown, another newly elected MP, and later with party communications guru Peter Mandelson, to chart a new course—one built on the values of community and interdependence that Blair holds dear, as well as on the middle-class sensibilities that come naturally to him. In 1994, after three subsequent general election defeats, Blair was elected party leader, and immediately set out to create a new Labour Party.

"Once we have victory in Baghdad, all the critics will look like fools," Cheney told one British official in the summer of 2002. His chief of staff Scooter Libby made little secret of their scorn for multilateralism. "Oh, dear, we'd better not do that," Libby would jibe, "or we might upset the Prime Minister."

As leader, Blair was determined to reorient Labour from its fixation on policy prescriptions to the first principles that would define the progressive project: opportunity, fairness, social justice, community, and responsibility. All Labour proposals, then, would be reevaluated as to how well they served these ends. This not only would make Labour politics more palatable to "middle England," but it also would serve as a tool to strip some of the most outdated and unpopular policy stances from Labour's platform. The seriousness of Blair's intent was crystal clear at his first party conference as leader, where he unveiled the party's new name "New Labour" and began the process of burying Clause IV of the party's constitution that called for the "common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange."

This modernization campaign touched every aspect of the party and raised the hackles of the Labour left. But slowly the effort to remake the party took hold, and in 1997 it bore fruit: New Labour was elected to a 179-seat parliamentary majority (35 seats larger than Thatcher's at her 1983 height). Tony Blair became the first Labour prime minister in 18 years.

The parallels between Blair's New Labour and Bill Clinton's New Democrats (as well as the close friendship between the two leaders) have been documented previously. But many have assumed that, since Blair was elected after Clinton, New Labour was the child of the New Democrats. With his explanation of Blair's intellectual influences and the history of his battle to reform the party, Stephens makes the persuasive argument that this was not the case. New Labour grew up alongside the New Democrats; it did not spring from it.

As prime minister, Blair extended his beliefs on community beyond his country to the world. "If individuals could thrive only in strong societies," explains Stephens, "so nations would prosper only in a secure international community." To Blair, advanced, powerful democracies should bond together through multilateral institutions such as the European Union, NATO, and the United Nations and take responsibility for policing the world when its norms are violated. But there was both a realism and a morality to his vision. As he said to the South African parliament in 1999, "When the international community agrees to certain objectives and then fails to implement them, those that can act, must."

This muscular multilateralism was behind Blair's enthusiasm for NATO intervention in Kosovo. It also shaped his response to the attacks of September 11. In Blair's

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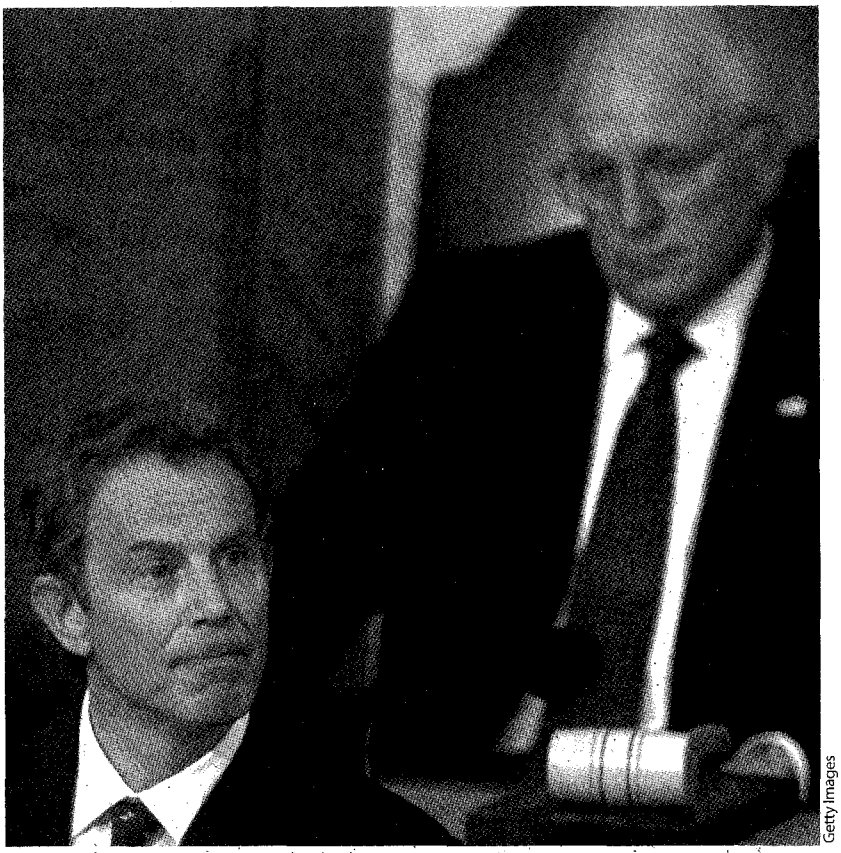
eyes, the rise of international Islamic terrorism as well as the presence of rogue nations, failed states, and easily obtainable weapons of mass destruction posed an existential threat not just to Britain or the United States, but to the international system that gives both individual prosperity and national strength. At the same time, Blair saw another threat to international order: the United States choosing to "jump out of the international system" and pursue its enemies alone with ferocious force.

This appreciation of these very different, but serious, challenges to the world order is why in the fall of 2001, Blair traveled more than 50,000 miles on a mission to convince dozens of world leaders to join the coalition against terrorism. He wanted to defeat an enemy, but do so while building a community.

This became tougher once Bush's attention turned to Iraq. Stephens argues that the British PM believed that regime change in Iraq was, in Blair's oft-repeated phrase, "the right thing to do," because Saddam was oppressing his people and because the combination of rogue nationhood, presumed WMDs, and the presence of international terrorist cells in that country posed a serious threat to international order. But Blair had a very different goal than the Bush administration for marching to Baghdad. He wanted an Iraq invasion to send a clear signal to the world that the international community intended to build a new security system based on peacemaking, nation-building, and, of course, military might. He emphatically did not want it to be seen as a display of raw American power.

Blair tried desperately to convince President Bush of his view, but the influence of Vice President Cheney, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and their associates was too great. Cheney, reports Stephens, was particularly eager to go to war. "Once we have victory in Baghdad, all the critics will look like fools," Cheney told one British official in the summer of 2002. Cheney chief of staff Scooter Libby "made little secret of their scorn for multilateralism," writes Stephens. "Oh, dear, we'd better not do that," Libby would jibe, "or we might upset the Prime Minister." Faced with going along with a war in whose goals he strongly believed, but in whose public rationale he did not, Blair had no choice. He understood that Britain was no longer a "great power," but rather—in his words—a "pivotal power" bridging Europe and America. A loss of support on either continent would diminish his influence on the other.



Getty Images

In the run-up to the war, Vice President Cheney, in the words of one Blair aide, "waged a guerrilla war" against the British prime minister's desire to pass another U.N. resolution before the invasion.

For a few days in March of last year, it looked as if Blair would have to pay the politician's ultimate price for his backing of Bush. Three of his ministers resigned in protest, and it appeared that New Labour support for the war was crumbling. Although one-third of his own party's MPs voted against the war, Blair survived, yet at the cost of incalculable political capital in Europe and among the rank and file at home.

In many ways, the leader of America's greatest ally stands alone today. Most of Western Europe rejects his foreign policy and is repulsed by his closeness to Bush. In America, many Democrats have all but abandoned the Third Way in which, just five years earlier, they and New Labour found common cause. At the same time, Republicans, with whom Blair joined in the war against Iraq, have shown near total disregard for his desire to fight the war against terror through international alliances and institutions. After seven years in office and no real rival for a third term, then, Blair finds himself in an unlikely position. His fate is inextricably tied up with that of an unwavering ally, but not a best friend.

Kenneth S. Baer, a Democratic political consultant, is the author of *Reinventing Democrats: The Politics of Liberalism from Reagan to Clinton* and received his doctorate from Oxford University.

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Crowd Control

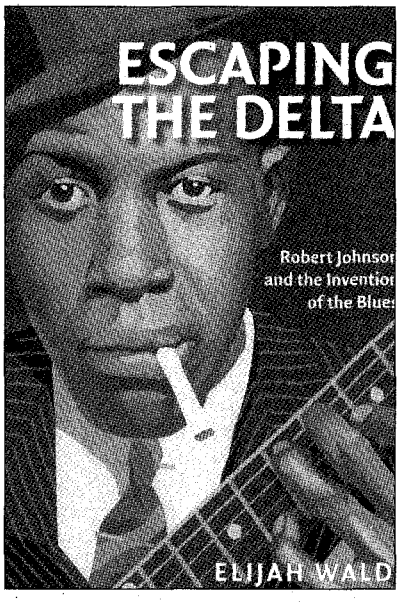
How audiences make music.

By Steve Braun

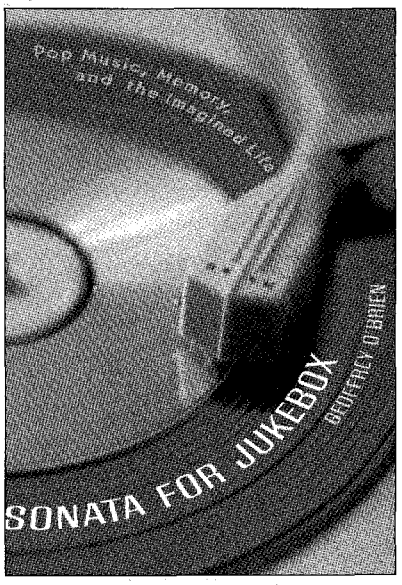
One morning in 1998, I drove to a funeral home in Chicago's South Side to watch a crowd of aging bluesmen pay final tribute to harmonica great Junior Wells. Buddy Guy, who had played Chicago's fabled club circuit for years with Wells, was there, slumped down forlornly beside several wizened session men. Son Seals, another of the city's guitar legends, showed up with his head webbed by bandages, just two weeks after his wife had shot him in the face. The coffin was open, and someone had placed a pint bottle of rye and several blues harps next to the late Junior, who lay there looking stately in a powder-blue suit and derby.

Then, from a rear pew in the parlor, I overheard two elderly Mississippi Delta natives commiserating on their dying generation. "Too many gray heads around here, too many," one of them muttered. "One of these days, there won't be none of us left." As they talked, I realized their wistful conversation was the germ of a neglected story. For years, music writers and historians have fretted over the diminishing legion of elderly blues musicians, warning of the music's fading heritage. But the experts' obsession with artists alone has long shunted aside the seminal role that their original audience of Delta transplants played in nurturing the city's blues music.

The blues-loving African Americans who streamed north to Chicago before and after World War II were, indeed, crucial in the development of that city's world-famous strain of electrified R&B. They demanded louder music, partly because their noisy rent parties and clubs required amplification unnecessary in the Delta's hushed, isolated jukes. Electric instruments that were rare in Mississippi were easier found in Chicago's myriad music stores. And audiences whose tastes expanded to the blaring big bands of Count Basie and jump bands of Louis Jordan no longer had patience for the quieter acoustic blues of an older generation—just as today's rap fans snicker at 1960s soul music as tame and passé.



Escaping the Delta
By Elijah Wald
Amistad Press, $24.95



Sonata For Jukebox
By Geoffrey O'Brien
Counterpoint Press, $25.00

We're so accustomed to thinking of art as something that emerges from a creator's inner muse that we often overlook the critical interaction between artist and audience. While the growth of Napster has lately been hailed as the liberation of music consumers, still forgotten is the fact that record buyers have long exercised a subtle but enormous sway over their favorite musicians, influencing the songs they played and the styles they adopted. The recognition that the audience is no less important than the performers themselves in sustaining a musical movement is what lies at the heart of two new books: Elijah Wald's revisionist blues history, *Escaping the Delta* and critic Geoffrey O'Brien's collection of essays, *Sonata For Jukebox*.

In *Escaping the Delta*, musician and blues academic Wald gives powerful evidence of the impact that the Mississippi Delta blues audience had on its premiere early musicians. Although the book concentrates almost exclusively on blues, it digs deep into the symbiotic tug of war between musicians and their listeners—and rap critics and historians who lazily buy the premise that artists are top dog in that relationship. Wald describes how white scholars and blues buffs who constructed the legend of

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short-lived but influential Delta bluesman Robert Johnson got both his art and his influences all wrong. For years, blues historians used Johnson's handful of recordings to pigeonhole him as a doomed noble savage, insisting his stark, poetic songs—long seen as a wellspring for Chicago blues and, ultimately, rock and roll—were derived only from his unique talent and his immediate Mississippi roots.

But Johnson was anything but isolated from the world around him, and, as Wald shows, he was an inveterate crowd pleaser and a keen student of both black and white strains of popular music that could be heard by anyone with a cheap radio. Wald uses interviews with some of Johnson's surviving contemporaries and mines social research dating back to the 1930s and 1940s to show that Johnson regularly played popular swing ditties for both black and white audiences, ranging from "Yes Sir, That's My Baby" to "My Blue Heaven" to "Tumbling Tumbleweeds." "The people who were buying blues records," Wald writes, "were not spending their hard-earned cash to hear the same stuff they heard or sang during their workdays in the fields." Wald lists recordings found on old jukeboxes in several Mississippi juke joints from 1941 (three years after Johnson died), that portray locals listening not only to popular blues artists like Bill Broonzy and Walter Davis, but also to white big bandleaders Glenn Miller and Sammy Kaye, crooners like The Ink Spots and the 4 Clefs, and jazz artists like Earl Hines and Art Tatum. Even Muddy Waters, who would become the patriarch of Chicago blues and idol to the Rolling Stones, blithely told musicologist Alan Lomax in 1941 that his repertoire at the time included Gene Autry, C&W yodels, and swing standards "Chattanooga Choo Choo" and "Red Sails in the Sunset."

While Wald looks at his 1930s Delta blues audience from a distance, using old documents and interviews to detail their influence over wandering minstrels like Johnson, essayist Geoffrey O'Brien goes inside in *Sonata For Jukebox*, trying to capture the intimate experience of listening to music. A writer for *The New York Review of Books* and the son of a New York disc jockey, O'Brien uses a succession of vignettes—some observed, some apparently fictional—to depict different audiences tuning to and living with music. He aims to capture the elusive moment when a song takes over a listener and then chart its staying power, its ability to burrow inside and re-emerge months, years, decades later, evoking lost youth, churning middle-age, even bittersweet senior years. "The question of what exactly we remember when we listen to old recordings, or whether it can be called remembering at all, becomes less and less answerable over a lifetime," he writes. Those "recollections of first encounters," he posits, become "private legends," endlessly provoked by a "particular piece of music, a particular phrase, a particular catch in the throat."

The blues-loving African Americans who streamed north to Chicago before and after World War II were crucial to the development of that city's world-famous strain of electrified R&B. They demanded louder music, partly because their noisy rent parties and clubs required amplification unnecessary in the Delta's hushed, isolated jukes.

The point, O'Brien explains, is "to describe some aspects of how lives are lived in the presence—and the memory of the presence—of music." It's a daring, difficult conceit because, of course, each person's reaction to music is different. If we all responded to music the same way, everyone on earth would own the Eagles *Greatest Hits*. O'Brien can only dig into himself for inspiration, taking his innermost musings and attempting to make them come alive for his readers. For his essays to work, his readers must, to some degree, feel the way that he feels about particular compositions. But if his reactions are confused, the connection with the reader sparks out. Like an eagerly anticipated CD that turns out to have an equal share of classics and duds, O'Brien's collection only occasionally hits the mark.

He divides his 15 essays into three sections, "Exposition," "Development," and "Recapitulation." The ones that leave the most lasting impression are in the first section. They are grounded in real life, in the private shards of O'Brien's own family, and their power rests in the real lives they evoke through the strains of 20th-century popular music. For example, in "Wyoming Valley's Most Famous Band," O'Brien tells the story of his grandfather, Bob Owens, a bandleader who in the 1930s traveled the Pennsylvania mining hinterlands heading a unit of 10 swing musicians known as the Rainbow Club Orchestra. O'Brien builds a poignant, knowing portrait from old photographs and musty snatches of sheet music classics like "Sweet Sue." He reminds us that Owens and the hardened miners who danced to his band's standards were ones that propelled Benny Goodman and Glenn Miller and their swing revolution. O'Brien's triumph is bringing that audience alive again—showing how music intertwines with the fabric of downtrodden people's lives. The essay is a perfect-pitch ode to a forgotten relative's buried world.

In the "Development" section, O'Brien describes the early 1960s radio landscape that his father encountered as a DJ. This is the pre-

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Getty Images

Ma Rainey, who began as a vaudeville performer, had evolved into a popular blues singer by the 1920s, when female blues artists caught the public eye. Here she performs with her Georgia Jazz Band in 1923 in Chicago.

Beatles American expanse of "vulgar fun," where the "Peppermint Twist" and shallow Brill Building pop "are what people's lives are dressed in." But as O'Brien flashes back and forth between his father's recreated world and his own child's-eye reminiscences, he often slips into stereotypes. American life then was a cartoon, he writes, replete with "oversized hilariousness, huge grotesqueness." He mentions *MAD* Magazine, Jerry Lewis, "big breasted blondes." It is an easy approximation of the 1960s torn from television listings, but it has none of the vivid secret life of his grandfather's band circuit or his dad's broadcasts. And he fails to use the era's musical chaff as counterpoint to the underworld that those bright tunes ignored—the gathering discord over civil rights, the Kennedy assassination and its contagion of violence, the swamp of Vietnam.

By "Recapitulation," O'Brien's approach grows ponderous. Typical are two essays called "Central Park West," both based on jazz tenor sax prophet John Coltrane's elegiac tribute to an Upper West Side warren of apartments and shops. O'Brien tries to weave a portrait of an alternate, personal New York, using Coltrane's ballad as starting point. But instead of the densely-rendered worlds of O'Brien's father and grandfather, we get a stylized, static world full of imaginary characters whose internal lives are never fleshed out.

Still, though not every essay works, the best are able to convey some aspect of what it is like to be swept away by the soundtrack of American life. In doing so, O'Brien, like Wald, implicitly debunks music historians' glib adaptation of Thomas Carlyle's "Great Man" theory—that great music is solely the product of great men. Both Wald and O'Brien remind us of the importance of the synergy between the performers and their audiences. "It is all about the audience," Wald writes toward the end of his book. "Because all of those artists—like almost any artists, anywhere, anytime—did their greatest work when they were performing regularly for audiences that understood them and demanded their greatest work."

In a coda near the end of his book, O'Brien summons up a grace note to impart the symbiotic relationship between musician and listener, evoking both the lasting power of a remembered song and the audience's crucial role in shaping the music that flows around it. It comes in one of his final passages, a recollection of eavesdropping on a man who was walking down a road in New York's Hudson Valley, playing a guitar. The man strummed "a plaintive wordless ballad, for no one but himself." O'Brien, listening by accident, kept the moment alive, internally memorizing a sliver of performance that otherwise would have been lost to the air. For O'Brien, "it was as much as music—as much as the world—could be."

Steve Braun is a national correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times*.

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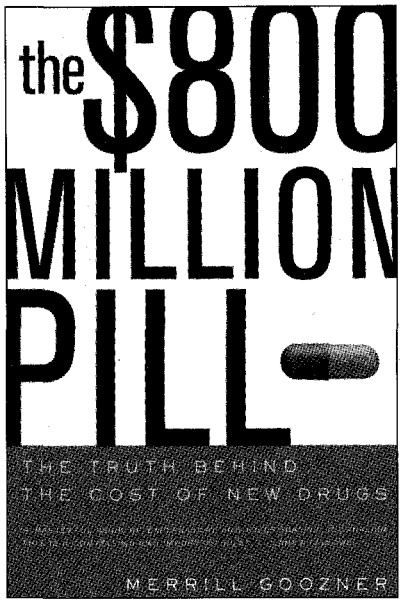
Plunder Drugs

Why Americans believe they have to put up with pharmaceutical profiteering.

By Shannon Brownlee

I have only two regrets over the life I led in my twenties. I should have gone on that sailing trip to the South Pacific with a group of entomologists seeking to study the insects on the exotic Marquesas Islands, instead of rushing back to college after my year off. My other regret is once back at school, I failed to heed the advice of the fellow graduate student who told all of us in the biology department at the University of California that we should scrape together every penny we had and invest in a startup biotechnology company called Amgen. Had I listened to him, I might be cruising the South Pacific in my own yacht instead of writing book reviews, because anybody who plunked down $100 in the mid-1980s on Amgen would have shares worth more than $1.5 million today.

Today, Amgen is the world's most successful biotechnology company, hailed regularly by Wall Street and the media as a shining example of the marriage between scientific ingenuity and the American entrepreneurial spirit. It is still headquartered in Thousand Oaks, Calif., the bedroom community of ranch houses and shopping malls an hour west of Los Angeles, where it was founded by a small group of scientists from UCLA in 1980. Back then, the company had no products, no warehouses, no laboratories—merely a handful of investors willing to bet that the fledgling firm could turn ideas into real drugs using recombinant DNA technology. Nine years later, Amgen launched its first product, Epogen, a genetically-engineered form of erythropoietin, one of the proteins made by the body that stimulates the production of red blood cells. Today, the company makes more than $5 billion a year, a third of which is profit, selling just three products. Epogen alone brings in over $1 billion, most of it from about 300,000 Americans on kidney dialysis, who would suffer debilitating anemia without it.



$800 Million Pill: The Truth Behind the Cost of New Drugs
By Merrill Goozner

University of California Press, $24.95

Epogen is truly a wonder drug. It eases many of the miserable symptoms that dialysis brings. But you don't have to be an economist to figure out that it is also incredibly expensive—among the most costly drugs on the market. The federal government picks up the tab for Epogen through the Medicare program that pays for dialysis. The company doesn't try to justify its high price on the basis of manufacturing costs; the recombinant DNA technology used to make Epogen is commonplace. And it long ago earned back its development expenses. Rather, as Merrill Goozner writes, the high price tag placed on Amgen products can only be justified as paying "for the scientists and technicians squirreled away in Thousand Oaks, who are busily searching for the next generation of wonder drugs."

Indeed, that is the mantra that the entire biotechnology and pharmaceutical industry begins chanting whenever the high price Americans pay for their medicine comes up. According to a 2001 Tufts University study—funded by the industry—it costs an average of $800 million to get a single new drug to market. But what biotech and Big Pharma companies don't tell you is that the vast majority of the new drugs they bring to market are "me-too drugs," new formulations of existing pharmaceuticals. They also don't tell you that they did not invest a dime in the basic research that produces the majority of breakthrough drugs.

Americans pay twice for the medications they take. First, their taxes go toward the federally-funded basic research that lies behind most such discoveries. The majority of new drugs are based on find-

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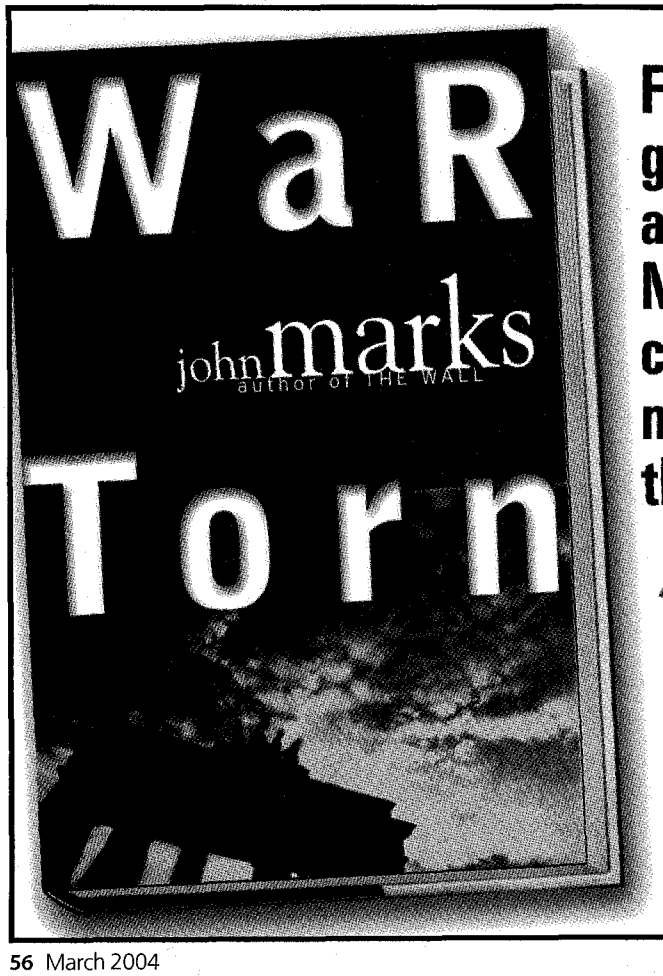
ings made by dedicated, hard-working, federally funded scientists in universities and government laboratories, not the research arms of drug companies. A recent congressional report found that of the 21 most important drugs introduced between 1965 and 1992, 15 were developed using knowledge and techniques from federally-funded research. Then the public pays astronomically for the drugs once they hit the market.

Why do we put up with the highest drug prices in the world? Because everybody from doctors to legislators, policy-makers, and patients has been bamboozled into believing that the breakthrough drugs of tomorrow will never materialize unless the drug industry makes an ungodly profit.

The $800 Million Pill is required reading for anybody who wants to understand the role Big Pharma and biotech companies play in driving up healthcare costs in America. This book does for drugs what *Fast Food Nation* did for fast food, peeling back the layers of science, clever accounting, and hype to expose the dark side of the nation's most profitable industry. Goozner, former chief economics correspondent for *The Chicago Tribune*, tells a series of deft and engaging stories about the discovery and development of a half dozen drugs. Amgen's blockbuster blood booster Epogen, for instance, was the product of 20 years of slogging work by Eugene Goldwasser, a soft-spoken, unassuming biochemist at the University of Chicago who in 1977 isolated the protein that formed the basis for the drug.

Why do we put up with the highest drug prices in the world? Because everybody from doctors to legislators, policy makers, and patients has been bamboozled into believing that the breakthrough drugs of tomorrow will never materialize unless the drug industry makes an ungodly profit.

Then there's Roscoe Brady, the cell biologist who spent his entire career at the National Institutes of Health, taking apart the cellular machinery that lies behind a half-dozen rare genetic disorders and producing the proteins that would later lead to therapies. Brady's first discovery led directly to Ceredase, a drug for treating the devastating symptoms of Gaucher's Disease, which afflicts fewer than 10,000 people worldwide, generally killing them before they reach adulthood. Brady and his NIH colleagues helped Genzyme Corporation, which markets Ceredase, "overcome every obstacle it encountered in the



From the author of the gripping Cold War thriller and *New York Times* Notable Book *The Wall* comes a suspenseful new novel, set in Berlin and the former Yugoslavia.

"Complex, beautifully savage...Every character is torn between past and present, between the promise of an adoptive country and the pull of a ruined homeland."
—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

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development of [the drug]," Goozner writes. The company then turned around and charged patients as much as $350,000 a year for a drug they would have to take for the rest of their lives. When Congress called Genzyme to task for profiteering, the company's CEO, Henri Termeer, fired back in the pages of *The Wall Street Journal* that the company had every right to charge what the market would bear, because it had risked everything to develop Ceredase. "If we hadn't taken the first step, there would be no market, and no additional research on the disease," Termeer wrote, conveniently forgetting that Roscoe Brady and federal funds had done the lion's share of the work.

In the final third of the book, Goozner uses his skills as an economics and business reporter to full advantage, deconstructing industry accounting methods that allow it to count development costs twice over. He suggests changes to patent law which would close off loopholes that now lead companies to waste time and money squabbling among themselves over patent rights. As one Wall Street analyst quipped about Amgen, some pharmaceutical companies look like great legal departments that happen to make drugs on the side.

My personal favorite among Goozner's suggestions for reform is a new federally-funded institute, dedicated to tracking and comparing medications. I like this idea in part because I suggest the same thing in another magazine. But Goozner and I aren't the only ones who think the National Institutes of Health—or some other agency—should step up to the plate and fund the independent, unbiased research that is desperately needed by doctors, patients, and lawmakers who have been misled for too long into believing that America's health depends upon the pharmaceutical industry staying at the top of Fortune 500.

Shannon Brownlee is a senior fellow at the New America Foundation.

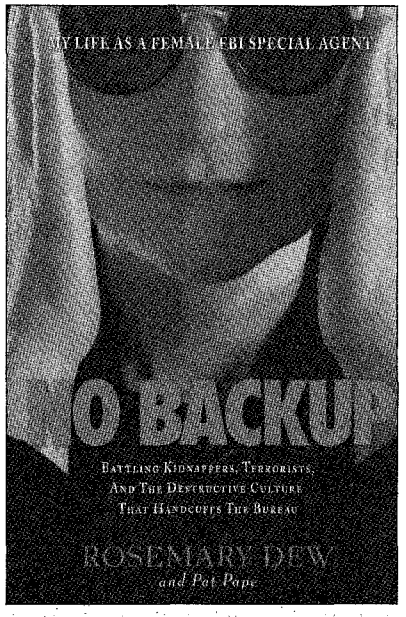
Rude Boys

How bigotry and arrogance at the FBI undermine national security.

By Sandy Bergo

A few years ago, Rosemary Dew was an ex-FBI agent working for a contractor when she was asked to manage a project to upgrade one of the bureau's many antiquated computer systems. That the assignment was headed for trouble became clear in her first meeting with her counterpart, the FBI agent in charge of the project who proclaimed that he had removed the "ragheads" from their work area. Apparently "ragheads" was his way of referring to employees who practiced the Sikh religion and wore turbans. Yet these "ragheads," Dew knew, were computer scientists. The FBI agent handling the contract, by contrast, had no technical expertise. But that didn't stop him from trying to pester Dew to add on cool-sounding features he read about in popular computer magazines. Nor did it stop another higher-ranking agent from stalling progress on the computer project by wasting a two-hour meeting picking out colors for a new logo, rather than discussing content needs with the 20 FBI agents assembled for that purpose.

Such incidents of arrogance and bigotry abound in this memoir. Yes, Rosemary Dew is a disgruntled former employee. Yes, she was unable to tough it out, and quit the FBI after 13 years as an agent and supervisor. Yes, she is angry and bitter, and it



No Backup: My Life as a Female FBI Special Agent
By Rosemary Dew and Pat Pape
Carroll & Graf, $25.00

shows. But it would be a mistake to discount her testimony. For she makes the case that the insular, turf conscious, macho culture of the FBI, a culture that tolerates boorish and racist behavior and is closed to new ideas, is inextricably linked to some of its most grievous security lapses.

We now know, for instance, that the FBI's outdated computer systems were at least partly responsible for the failure of internal investigators to recognize that Robert Hanssen was passing secrets to the Soviets, and for the inability of

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Bureau agents to share suspicious information they had about the al Qaeda hijackers before 9/11 with other investigators inside and outside the bureau. Without changes in that culture, Dew makes clear, such lapses are likely to recur.

Dew joined the FBI five years after it started hiring women agents. Harassment began almost immediately. During her rookie year at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Va., speakers addressing her class laced their lectures with dirty jokes and warnings to the ladies that working alongside men meant accepting their crude talk. One instructor, teaching a class how to load a gun, said that feeling for the hole in the cylinder was like feeling a woman's vaginal area.

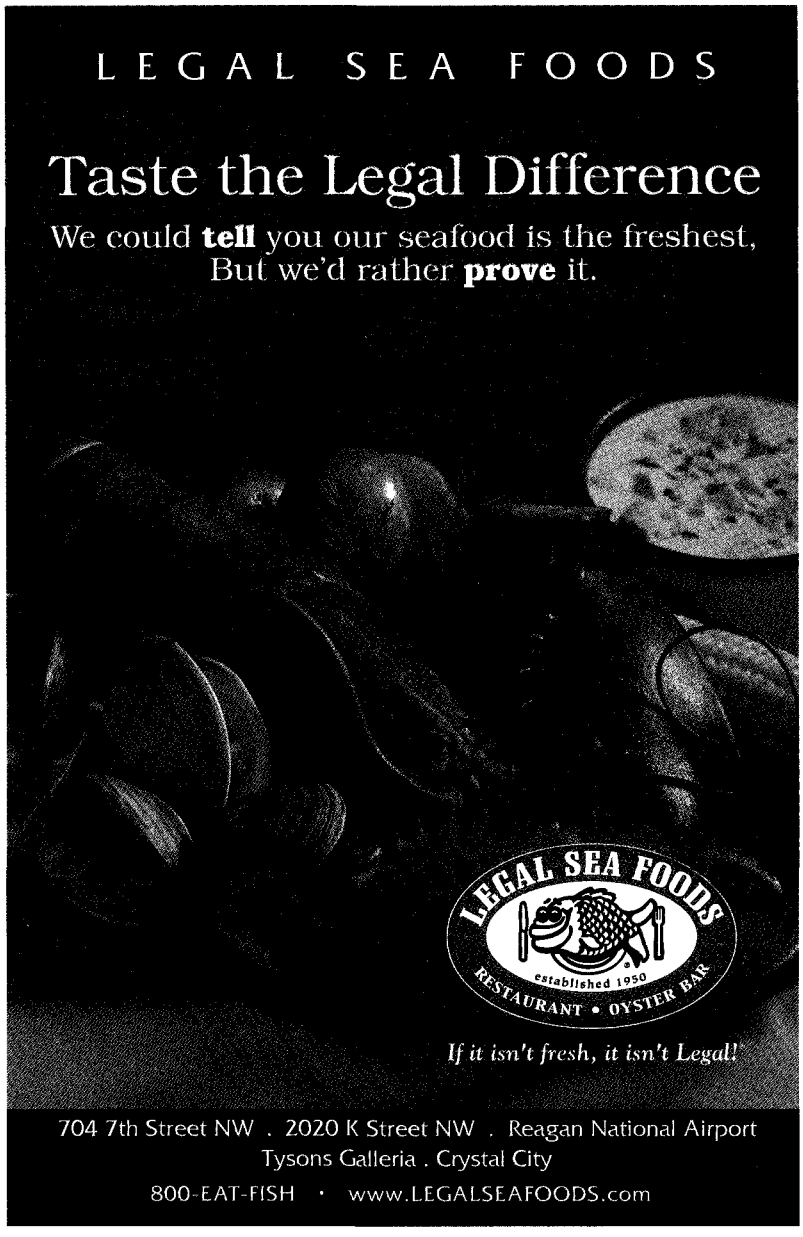
As Dew advanced from agent to supervisor, moving from field offices in San Francisco, to Washington, D.C., to Denver, she says she repeatedly encountered harassment. Her only respite: Two years spent at FBI headquarters in Washington, where she was treated with respect. But in the field offices, there was a steady stream of incidents: the agent who openly—without fear of rebuke—used foul sexual slang to refer to women agents; the supervisor who visited her home and wanted to have sex with her; and the frequent comments from coworkers and bosses that women weren't up to the job. Colleagues and supervisors told her to develop a thick skin, laugh it off, and keep quiet. Dew quit.

Much of what Dew describes as wrong with the FBI is a direct legacy of J. Edgar Hoover's 48-year paranoid reign. Under Hoover, the preservation of bureaucratic turf while maintaining an image of perfection mattered more than effectiveness. As an agent, Dew found a surprising lack of professionalism that actually put her at risk. In one incident—from which the title of her book *No Backup* is taken—she was given the potentially dangerous assignment of dropping off a package for a kidnapper in a dead-end alley. She was told that fellow agents were in hidden lookouts, and would swarm in and back her up if there were signs of trouble. She later learned the agents were in positions with no view of her, and planned to act only if they actually heard gunshots.

Her recommendations on how to fix the bureau are blunt. Improve internal affairs procedures and disciplinary standards; eliminate a double standard she claims lets high-ranking officials off the hook and unfairly punishes more junior employees. Investigate systemic problems and learn from them—transforming a culture of fear that promotes cover-ups. Narrow the bureau's now overcommitted mission whose present responsibilities stretch from counterterrorism to bank robberies. Resolve the struggle for control between headquarters and field offices, a conflict that has stopped investigations in their tracks. And, of course, take action against employees who harass women and minorities.

Despite professional writing help, Dew's storytelling sometimes lacks polish. Instead, the power of this memoir lies in its raw, authentic voice and first-hand knowledge of the inner workings of a troubled agency. It's a voice that the intelligence community ignores at its own peril. And ours.

Sandy Bergo is a freelance writer and former TV investigative producer.



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Meanwhile in **America** by Joe Sacco

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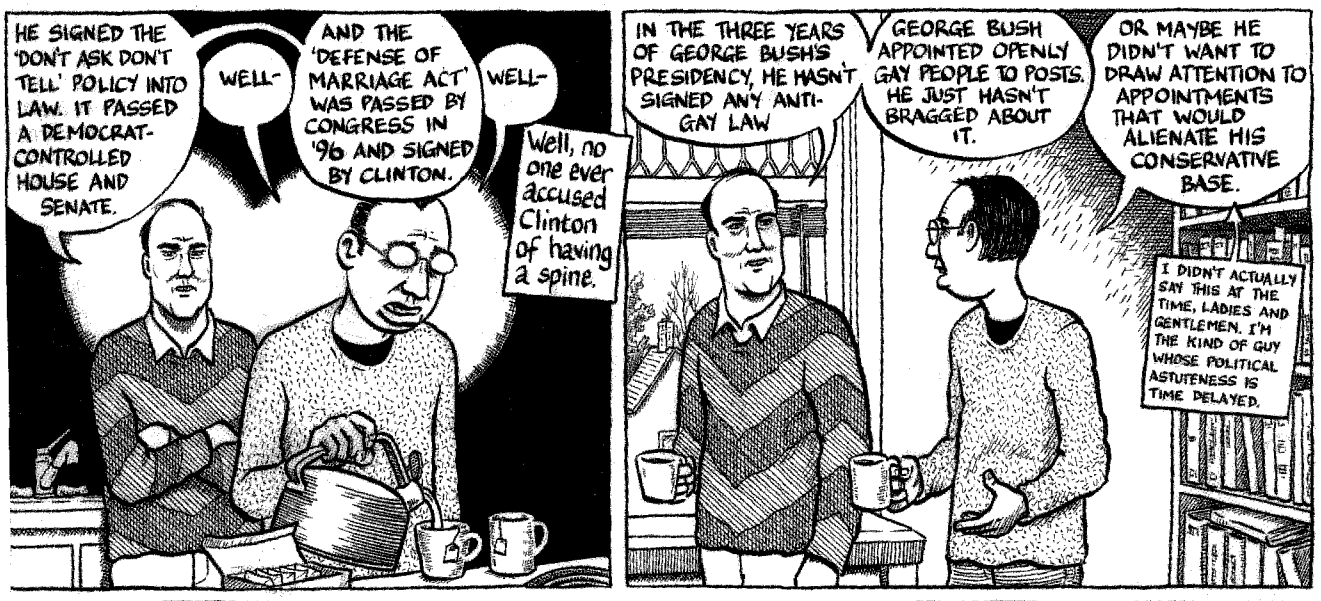
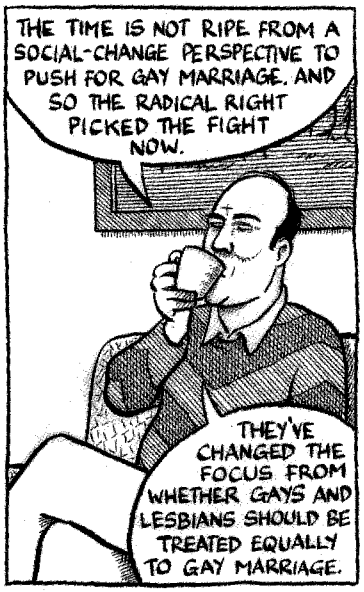
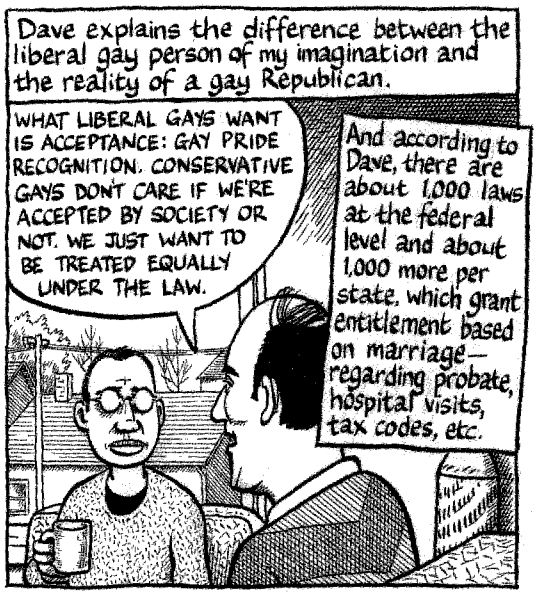


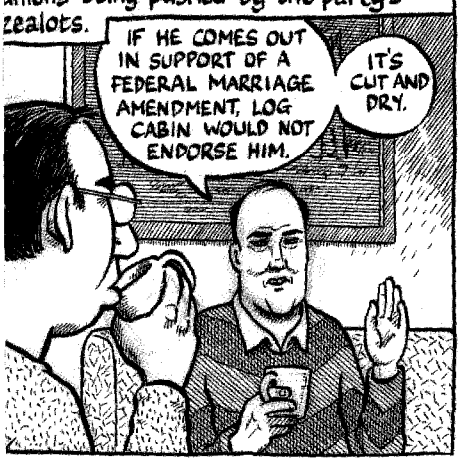
But getting back to marriage, I ask Dave if it's an issue for him. Says Dave, "I was at a wedding once, and it struck me that I wasn't going to get married... For me, personally, it does matter because I have not only a civil but a religious perspective of what marriage means."

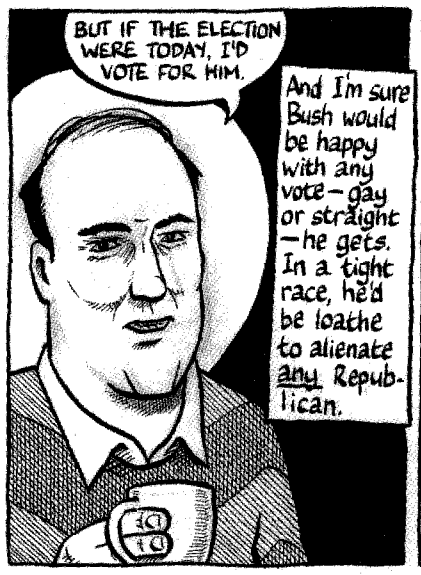


Dave explains the difference between the liberal gay person of my imagination and the reality of a gay Republican.

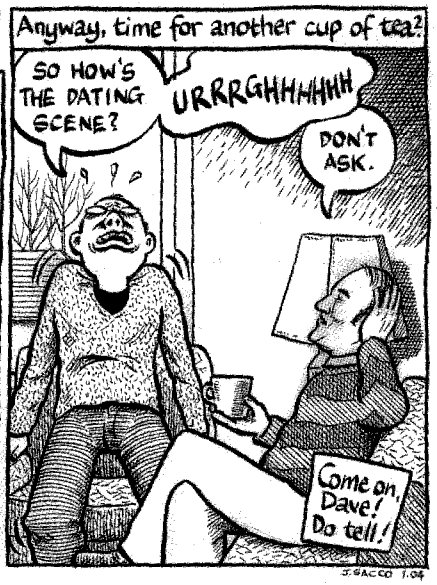


So, says Dave, Bush will suddenly find himself on thin ice with Republican gays if he endorses the ban on same-sex unions being pushed by the party's zealots.





Anyway, time for another cup of tea?



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Janet Maslin
in *The New York Times*
says Debra Dickerson's
new book

Gerald Early
in *The New York Times*
says Debra Dickerson'
new book

THE END OF BLACKNESS

"makes her a star. A dazzling diatribe that reveals Ms. Dickerson as a Molotov-cocktail polemicist. She has distilled a lifetime's worth of eye-opening realizations into a furious, bitterly funny indictment. Even readers whom she enrages—and there will be many—cannot ignore the range and ferocity of her attack. Ms. Dickerson deserves to fan the same kind of flames that made an academic celebrity of Camille Paglia, and that routinely catapults us-vs.-them screeds to the best-seller list. Above all, it appears intended less as an assault than as an invitation."

"lacks nuance and balance. The problems with this book ar several and severe. Politically, Dickerson wants to have her cak and eat it too, so she nods to conservatives in saying blacks need to 'do for self' and quit worrying about what whites thir of them, and nods to liberals ir saying how horrible whites are and how persistent and unrelenting racism is. The problem is that the author does no know enough to write an incisive book on African-American life or American racism.'

READ THE CONTROVERSY

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